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RAIPUR, WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 30, 2024; PAGES 12-13



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**SPORTS 11**  
BOPANNA-EBDEN  
PAIR CLINCHES SPOT  
IN ATP FINALS

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## ARMY IS THE BOSS TERRORISTS ELIMINATED



Indian Army's Ghatak team carrying out an extensive search operation in the dense forest of 'Dehra Ki Galli', in Rajouri district, Jammu and Kashmir

(SOG), bolstered by local intelligence and community assistance. Troops maintained comprehensive domination of the area, operating under challenging conditions during the night. Major General Sameer Srivastava said Special Forces were mobilised promptly to reinforce the cordon around the fleeing terrorists. Advanced technology, including night surveillance devices, unmanned ground vehicles & surveillance drones ensured real-time tracking and prevented potential escapes. "We have used unmanned vehicles, artificial intelligence that gave us a quick and successful result... We lost one Army Dog - he was ahead when we were doing search operations, and terrorists fired upon the Dog. It's due to his sacrifice, many of the lives could be saved," Major General Sameer Srivastava told reporters during the briefing. "After this operation, such information was spreading that the Army had used BMP - we had used that kind of vehicle because the area was tough - with a gradient of 30 degrees and dense forest - we used those vehicles after locating terrorists to reach there..." Major General Srivastava added. Referring to some of the rumours in social media, Major General Sameer Srivastava said, "We also want to dispel some rumours going around on Social Media about the use of BMPs in this operation."

**MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU**  
All three dreaded foreign terrorists, who were holed up inside a religious place since Monday morning, were eliminated by the joint team of security forces in the Batal area of Akhnoor in the 27-hour-long anti-terrorist operation without suffering any major collateral damage. A group of heavily armed terrorists, dressed in combat fatigues, were spotted by the local villagers in the Batal area early Monday morning after three school-going children came in contact with them in the close vicinity of a religious place. The terrorists, it is believed, were tasked to target

an army convoy in the area to disturb peace. One of the three terrorists who fired at an army ambulance was eliminated by the security forces on Monday afternoon. However, special forces were inducted to flush out the terrorists holed up inside the religious place. The Indian army had also deployed BMP-II, infantry combat vehicles to ferry troops to the nearest location before launching a final assault on the terrorists holed up inside the religious place. Briefing media persons after Operation ASAN was called off, GoC 10 RAPID (H) Major General Sameer Srivastava along with DIG Samba-Kathua range Shiv Kumar Sharma and

Brig Kapil Taneja, Commander 28 Infantry Brigade told reporters, the Indian Army successfully thwarted a terror ambush in the dense jungles of Batal, Jammu, on October 28, 2024, resulting in the elimination of three terrorists. Major General Sameer Srivastava said the terrorists who targeted the army convoy were present in the area for some time and had not infiltrated recently. He said the operation which started around 7.20 am on Monday was completed in a record time without suffering any collateral damage on Tuesday. He said the operation demonstrated synergy with the Jammu and Kashmir Police (JKP) and the Special Operation Group

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## Disengagement almost complete

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Having agreed to disengage from the friction points in Demchok and Depsang at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh last week, India and China have nearly completed the process. The two sides will now verify the situation and commence patrolling in their respective zones. Troop disengagement at two friction points at Demchok and Depsang Plains in eastern Ladakh following a key agreement firmed up between India and China is in the "final stages," official sources said on Tuesday. On October 25, sources had said the process was likely to be completed by October 28-29. The agreement framework was "signed" first at the diplomatic level and then military-level talks took place, the Army sources had said, adding the nitty-gritty of the agreement was worked into the Corps Commander-level talks, which was signed last week. Adhering to agreements between the two sides, Indian troops then began to pull back equipment to rear locations in these areas. The disengagement at the two friction points is in its "final stages," an official source said on Tuesday. Sources last week said the agreement was arrived at only for these two friction points, and "talks were still underway" for other areas.

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## Sixteen days, 510 hoax calls, three arrests



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI/NAGPUR

More than 100 flights operated by various Indian airlines received bomb threats on Tuesday. In 16 days, over 510 domestic and international flights have received threats that later turned out to be hoaxes. The threats were issued mostly through social media. Meanwhile, the Nagpur police arrested a 35-year-old man from Maharashtra's Gondia, who was allegedly behind the spate of hoax bomb threats that triggered panic, caused flight delays, and led to increased security at airports and other establishments. Air India received threats for around 36 flights and IndiGo for about 35 flights. Vistara received the threats for 32 flights. "A number of Air India flights were subject to security threats received on social media on 29 October 2024. Following the laid down protocols, relevant authorities were immediately alerted, and all security procedures strictly adhered to, as per guidance from the regulatory authorities," an airline spokesperson said in a statement. As many as 14 FIRs in October in connection with the bomb threats to airlines. In a related development, designated terrorist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun

has also issued a threat specifically named several Air India flights in his recent video message, focusing on routes between New Delhi and Toronto (AI 187, AI 189), Vancouver (AI 185), London (AI 111, AI 161), Frankfurt (AI 121), Sydney (AI 302), and Melbourne (AI 308). Additional threats target Mumbai-London routes (AI 129, AI 131). Meanwhile, the Nagpur police Special Branch has identified him as Jagdish Uikey, an author of a book on terrorism, who had been arrested in 2021 in a separate case. Uikey was identified after the hoax emails were traced back to him. So far three persons have been arrested in the hoax bomb threats probe. One was arrested from Indira Gandhi International Airport, and the second arrest was made from Chhattisgarh. The investigation, led by Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Shweta Khedkar uncovered detailed information linking Uikey to the emails. According to Nagpur police, Uikey sent emails to various government bodies, including the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Railway Minister, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and his deputy, airline offices, the Director General of Police (DGP) and the Railway Protection Force (RPF). On Monday, the Nagpur police stepped up security outside Deputy Chief Minister and Home Minister Devendra Fadnis's residence in the city after Uikey sent an email threatening to protest unless given a chance to present his information on the secret terror code he claimed to have deciphered. He also requested a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to discuss his knowledge of terror threats, he added. Uikey's email sent on October 21 to Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav, and also forwarded to the DGP and RPF, led to security measures at railway stations, the official said.

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## Noida man arrested for death threats to Salman, Zeeshan

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai police has arrested a 20-year-old man from Noida in Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday for allegedly giving extortion and death threats to Bollywood super star Salman Khan and MLA Zeeshan Siddique, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP-Ajit Pawar) candidate and late Baba Ziauddin Siddique's son. Identifying the arrested accused as one Mohammed Tayab, alias Gufran Khan, the police said that he was being brought from Noida to Mumbai on a transit remand. Acting on a complaint registered by Ziauddin Siddique's office, on Monday, Mumbai's Nehru Nagar police traced Mohammed Tayab to Noida using tech-intel and rushed its team to New Delhi's satellite city. The visiting police team wanted the accused on Tuesday and produced him before a court and sought a transit remand. The police said that Mohammed Tayab, alias Gufran Khan, had on Friday last sent a threat message to Siddique's mobile phone used by the latter for receiving public grievances. So far, the police have arrested at least 15 persons from different parts of India for the Siddique killing that had sparked a nationwide political furore, coming ahead of the state Assembly elections. The preliminary investigations have revealed that the purported motive behind Mohammed Tayab sending threats to Siddique



and Salman Khan was to create a scare and extort money from them. Salman Khan and his legendary father Salim Khan are already facing multiple threats and attacks, from the Lawrence Bishnoi gang, and even some wannabe law-breakers who have targeted the celeb duo in recent months. The Nirmal Nagar Police have booked arrested-accused Khan under various sections of the BNS and further probe is underway to find out if he has any accomplices or mafia links. Siddique is contesting November 20, 2024 Maharashtra Assembly polls on a NCP-Ajit Pawar ticket from Bandra East Assembly constituency in north-west Mumbai. He and actor Salman Khan received extortion and death threats more than a fortnight after his father and former minister-father Baba Ziauddin Siddique was shot dead near his office on October 12 during the Dussehra festivities.

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## Ghaziabad court turns battlefield as lawyers, judge clash

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A district court in Ghaziabad witnessed massive chaos and drama after heated arguments between the Judge and lawyers. The ruckus broke out around 11 am in the court complex following a heated altercation between an advocate and the judge over the hearing of a matter related to anticipatory bail. The confrontation began when lawyers gathered outside the judge's room to voice their grievances regarding specific rulings that they deemed unjust. The judge then alerted the police, who arrived at the scene and



began to remove the lawyers. The situation escalated quickly, leading to a lathi charge by police

judge's room to voice their grievances regarding specific rulings that they deemed unjust. On condition of anonymity, a lawyer said that a group of advocates had demanded that District and Sessions Judge Anil Kumar should hear the case of anticipatory bail on priority, which he denied and stated that the case would be entertained as per the listing. However, purported video clips of the incident doing the rounds on social media showed a large number of police personnel and lawyers in a confrontation in the courtroom. Visuals of the clash between police and lawyers have

surfaced on social media, showing police using force to evict lawyers from the court premises. In the video, a policeman is seen taking a chair and threatening lawyers as if he would throw it on them after which lawyers are seen running through the corridor as cops continue to disperse them. Chairs were also hurled in the courtroom as police tried to bring the situation under control. Some of the lawyers sustained minor injuries in the incident and the Bar Association has called for a meeting over the incident. Angry over the lathi charge, the lawyers created a huge uproar.

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## Over 150 injured in fireworks accident at Kerala temple

PTI ■ KASARAGOD (KERALA)

A fire accident during a Theyyam performance at a temple near Neelawaram late last night left 154 people injured, eight of them seriously, when firecrackers stored in the vicinity exploded, police said on Tuesday. Kasargod District Police chief D Shilpa announced the formation of a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe into the fire accident. The district administration said

that the additional divisional magistrate has been directed to carry out an inquiry separately into the incident and submit a report. The incident happened at Anjoottanbalam Veererkavu Temple near Neelawaram in this northernmost district of Kerala, police said. Nileswaram police have registered a case into the firework accident under the Explosive Substance Act and various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

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## NCB busts a 'Breaking Bad' plot, Tihar Jail warden among the arrested

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), in coordination with the Delhi police Special Cell, has busted a methamphetamine manufacturing unit, linked to members of the Mexican drug cartel - Cartel De Jalisco Nueva Generación, in Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Budh Nagar, arrested five persons, and seized about 95 kg of the drugs. Shockingly, the laboratory was allegedly set up by a Delhi-based businessman along



with a Tihar Jail warden, and a Mexican cartel member was also part of the syndicate. The Special Cell of the Delhi Police was also roped in by the

federal anti-narcotics agency as "the drug network has footprints across several places in the National Capital Region". NCB's deputy director general (DDG) Gyaneshwar Singh said a Mumbai-based chemist and a Tihar jail warden are among the four people arrested and sent to three days police custody. Singh said that a West Delhi businessman and a Tihar Jail warden were in the factory at the time of the raid.

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## Cometh VIP, cometh traffic snarls in the heart of delhi

When busy main roads are frequently restricted, heavy traffic gets heavier

BY SAUMYA SHUKLA

Central Delhi is the worst affected by the perennial problem of 'VIP movement' where busy main roads are frequently restricted for the general public to allow various events, politicians and dignitaries to move in a secure manner. On Tuesday, the markets were catering to a sea of people buying goods, especially jewellery, for Dhanteras, and traffic restrictions were in place since the morning hours due to the 'Run For Unity' event, leading many to divert from their usual route and taking extra long to reach their destinations. Restrictions for the 'Run For Unity', organised to celebrate Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's birth anniversary, were effective around India Gate, C-Hexagon from 6.45 am till the

completion of the event. The Delhi Traffic police said, "Special traffic arrangements have been made in view of 'Run For Unity' from Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium on October 29, 2024 in celebration of #RashtriyaEktaDiwas." The police announced diversions have been announced in Tilak Marg-Bhagwan Dass Road Crossing, Purana Quila Road-Mathura Road Crossing, Shershah Road-Mathura Road Crossing, Dr. Zakir Hussain Marg-Subramanian Bharti Marg Crossing, Pandara Road-Subramanian Bharti Marg Crossing, roundabout Mansingh Road, roundabout Jaswant Singh Road, K.G Marg-Firozshah Road Crossing and roundabout Mandi House. With the already existing problems that commuters face including



Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

construction works that make the roads narrower, frequent breakdown of buses, illegal parkings that cramp up roads and restrict the free flow of traffic, public shared that such restrictions make their commute even more difficult especially in the morning hours when there is rush of office goers on the roads. "I left my home at 11 am, planning for a quick 25-minute trip to the office. But of course, Delhi's infamous traffic had other ideas. Here I am, stuck in gridlock in Central Delhi, likely to arrive just in time to see my colleagues return from their assignments. Perfect timing, as always!" a media professional said. These diversions not just affect the people only travelling in Central Delhi but all over the city. A commuter shared that he was stuck in traffic for

about half an hour due to VIP movement. "Traffic is stopped for the last 25 to 30 minutes on Badarpur flyover towards Delhi because of VIP movement. Can't what type of system is there as even ambulances are stuck," he said. In Central Delhi areas like ITO, Bengali Market, Connaught Place, and Mandi house, where people have come out in large numbers to shop and celebrate the festival, a similar situation prevailed. A commuter said, "Crucial time is being wasted at the ITO red light. An ambulance screeching sirens is falling on deaf ears of traffic personnel." About 7,700 people took part in the 'Run For Unity', which began from Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium according to the traffic advisory issued for the Delhi Traffic Police.



# Didi appeals for communal accord during festivals

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Mamata Banerjee has appealed to the people to maintain communal harmony during the festive seasons which has made Kolkata what it is --- the City of Joy.

Even as she went about inaugurating Kali Puja pandals across the city the Chief Minister told the gatherings to "celebrate Kali Puja and Diwali to promote mutual harmony and friendship and not to trigger riots." "There are people who use festivals to pursue their political interests ... there are others who take pleasure in criticising others ... I have no problem if you criticise me but please don't do anything that brings Kolkata and Bangla Maa (Mother Bengal) to disrepute," the Chief Minister said.

"I will ask people to enjoy the festival of lights but not indulge in communal tension or riots ... that is not what our Bengal is known for ... we live together ... we live in harmony and peace ... please do not indulge in any mischief or communal riot," Banerjee said. In an apparent bid to woo a section of people who do not



would not have been renaissance in India ... so we must respect the ethos of that Bengal," Banerjee said. Banerjee's appeal came a day after BJP leader and cine star Mithun Chakrabarty --- during his speech in his party's meeting on membership drive --- advocated a tit for tat for those "who would try to throw the 30 percent population of Murshidabad district in the waters of Bhagirathi River." He was speaking in reference to a statement made by Trinamool Congress MLA Humayun Kabir during general elections. He had then said that the men of his community constituted 70 percent of the population of Murshidabad and it would take no time for him to throw the BJP supporters in the waters of Bhagirathi (Ganga) if they committed any mischief. Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari too asked his party's supporters to remain united or else they would be chopped off like the members of the minority community in Bangladesh. "Agar Bantoge to Katoge ... ek rahoge to nek rahoge (divided we stand slain ... in unity is our wellbeing)" he told in the party meeting.

# Act against Shah for MCC violation: TMC to ECI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress has appealed to the Election Commission of India to take action against and restrain BJP leader and Union Home Minister Amit Shah from making political statements during official events in areas that were going to November 13 by-elections.

"We seek your urgent attention regarding a serious breach of the model code of conduct by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, which took place during the inauguration event of the integrated check post, passenger terminal and Maitri Dwar at Petrapole in North 24 Parganas," The TMC wrote to the ECI seeking its "appropriate directions/orders to stakeholders concerned to further restrain Shah and the BJP leaders from violating the MCC guidelines ahead of the by-elections."

Shah had during inauguration of a passenger-cum-goods terminal at the land port on the India-Bangladesh border appealed to the people for bringing a "parivartan (change)" in 2026 Assembly elections. He said that Bengal was in tur-



moil and the main reason of that disturbance was trans-border infiltration. So "if you want to bring back a lasting peace in Bengal you will have to stop trans-border infiltration which cannot take place without a political change ... and in order to do so you will have to bring about a parivartan (change) in Bengal." Referring to his statements in Petrapole --- which falls in North 24 Parganas district where two Assembly constituencies of Haroa and Naihati were going to by-polls --- the TMC said, "the politically charged remarks --- calling for a 'parivartan' in 2026 --- were in no way connected to the event in question."

As Shah "violated the directives" he should be served with "show-cause" notice, the TMC said.

The BJP hit back saying that the Home Minister had not made his comments within the area of any poll-bound constituency. "The TMC is trying to create controversy because they know that

They are gradually losing grounds beneath their feet," a State BJP leader said. Six seats of Bengal going to by-polls are Sitai, Madarihat in Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri districts of North Bengal. Haroa, Naihati in North 24 Parganas, Taldangra in Bankura and Medinipur in West Midnapore districts.

# Clash erupts between Left outfits and ABVP at JNU meet in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A clash erupted between students from the Left outfits and the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) early Tuesday during a University Governing Body Meeting (UGBM) at the Jawaharlal Nehru University over alleged derogatory remarks against Lord Ram.

The JNU Students' Union (JNUSU) alleged that the ABVP members hurled casteist slurs at office-bearers of JNUSU. The meeting was convened by the JNUSU to discuss their participation in the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) elections --- a body established to address sexual harassment complaints on campus.

The JNUSU has long been opposing the setting up of ICC in place of Gender Sensitization Committee Against Sexual Harassment (GSCASH) which was scrapped by the varsity in 2017. In a statement on Tuesday, the JNUSU alleged that ABVP members disrupted the proceedings of the UGBM by forcibly occupying the stage, and heckled and threatened its members. "As habitual offenders, the

ABVP started disrupting the UGBM. They heckled JNUSU President Dhananjay, Vice President Avijit Ghosh, and Joint Secretary Mohammad Sajid, as well as other students who came to share their views. They also directed casteist slurs at Dhananjay, calling him 'neech'," the statement said.

According to the JNUSU, ABVP members also threatened Sajid, saying "tumko bhi Najeeb bana denge", a reference to the disappearance of Najeeb Ahmed (a student of JNU who went missing from his hostel in 2016). JNUSU President Dhananjay said, "Ever since a Dalit student has become the president of JNUSU, ABVP and RSS are worried. Yesterday I was abused with casteist slurs, called 'neech' (lowly). They think they will get away by doing this, but it won't happen! I have come to the university to study while fighting Manuism and casteism in the society. And I will fight your casteist ideology till my last breath."

The meeting, which lasted until 2:30 am, had to be adjourned due to the chaos. Meanwhile, the ABVP accused the Left students' outfits of making derogatory remarks against Lord Ram.

# Sixteen days, 510 hoax threats, three arrests

From page 1

Meanwhile, in the wake of a significant rise in airline threat calls recently, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has intensified its security efforts across the nation. To address these growing threats, the NIA's cyber wing has launched a comprehensive analysis of these foreign threat calls. This investigation is focused on discerning the motives behind these calls and assessing their authenticity.

Against the backdrop of a spate of hoax bomb threats to airlines, the IT Ministry has asked social media platforms to observe due diligence obligations and promptly remove or disable access to misinformation within the strict timelines prescribed under IT rules. Also, the civil aviation ministry is looking to take legislative actions to tackle the menace of the hoax bomb threats to airlines. On Sunday, Civil Aviation Minister K Rammoohan Naidu said the Centre is mulling steps to ban perpetrators, who resort to hoax bomb threats, from flying.

# Cops request Interpol to issue RCN against fugitive accused of killing merchant navy officer

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MUMBAI/NEW DELHI

Maharashtra Police has requested Interpol to issue a Red Corner Notice (RCN) and arrest against Hussain Shattaf, a fugitive accused of using forged documents to flee the country after allegedly murdering Captain Manmohan Singh Viridi, a merchant navy officer, in Lonavala, Maharashtra. Viridi was killed in Lonavala on May 14 in 2006.

Official sources said following the Bombay High Court's order, the police have written to India's Interpol wing, managed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), to expedite the RCN



against Shattaf, who is also wanted for multiple cases across the State involving forgery and the use of fake documents. In an official communication addressed to Interpol, the Pune Superintendent of Police (SP) stated with subject, "Request regarding Provisional arrest of fugitive Hussain Mehboob Khokhawala alias Hussain Mohammed Shattaf. We are forwarding the Interpol reference with all the necessary details for further action. It is requested to communicate with UAE authorities for the next steps". The authorities are hopeful that this move will facilitate Shattaf's swift arrest and extradition to India.

# Two BJP leaders turn rebels, file nominations as independents from Mumbai

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a major setback to the ruling BJP, two of its leaders from Mumbai, including its former MP and two-time MLA Gopal Shetty, rebelled against the party and filed their nominations as Independents to contest the State Assembly polls scheduled for November 20.

Seventy-year-old Shetty filed his nomination as an independent from Borivali in north Mumbai, after the BJP denied him ticket to contest the polls and nominated an "outsider" Sanjay Upadhyay, who is

presently the Secretary for BJP Maharashtra, as its candidate. In another jolt to the BJP, its former corporator Atul Shah turned a rebel and filed nomination as an independent candidate from Mumbadevi Assembly constituency after the party decided to allot the seat to its ally, the Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde).

Tuesday was the last day for filing nominations for the State Assembly polls. Significantly enough, the Shinde Sena has fielded Shaina NC, a senior BJP functionary till some days ago, from Mumbadevi constituency

against Amin Patel of the Congress. Shaina switched over to the Shinde Sena after chief minister Eknath Shinde offered her a ticket to contest the polls from his party's quota. Talking to media after filing nomination as an Independent, Shetty --- who was incidentally the former president of the BJP's Mumbai unit president --- said that he did not aspire for a ticket, but was upset over an "outsider" being given the ticket.

"The issue is not about me not getting a ticket. I did not ask for a ticket. But party workers suggested my name...One of

the local Borivali workers should get a ticket," Shetty said.

Expressing his disappointment over his being denied a BJP ticket, Atul Shah said: "I have been representing the Mumbadevi seat for the last several years now. Now, the ticket has been given to someone else. This is not a musical chair. This is an election...The leadership should also know that if it is their mistake, there is still time to change it. We are loyalists of the party, we also make mistakes; mistakes can also be made by the leadership."

# Army is the Boss...

From page 1

He clarified the hardened vehicles were used to close in with the trapped terrorists. We want to also emphasise that the Indian Army is a professional force and no disrespect to the mortal remains of the slain terrorist has been carried out. The encounter also led to the recovery of war-like stores from the site, which, according to Army officials, will be

essential for securing the area. During Operation ASAN, Phantom, a Belgian Malinois dog, from the Indian Army's canine unit, made the supreme sacrifice. Phantom, born on May 25, 2020, joined the Army in August 2022 and was part of the team pursuing the terrorists in the Sunderbani sector. He was killed while helping security forces advance toward the enemy position.

Honouring Phantom's role, the White Knight Corps posted a heartfelt tribute on social media platform X. "We salute the supreme sacrifice of our true hero-a valiant Indian Army Dog, Phantom," the Corps posted. "As our troops were closing in on the trapped terrorists, Phantom drew enemy fire, sustaining fatal injuries. His courage, loyalty, and dedication will never be forgotten," the Army added.

# Ghaziabad court turns battlefield as...

From page 1

They vandalised the police post at the court complex and sat on a protest outside the court. The lawyers shouted slogans against the judge. Meanwhile, the judges have stopped their work in protest against the misconduct. After the incident, all the judges stopped working in the

court and the Bar Association called for a meeting. In July 2023, a clash between two groups of lawyers caused chaos at Delhi's Tis Hazari court complex. Videos quickly surfaced showing some lawyers firing what looked like country-made pistols, with at least five to six rounds being shot, causing people to panic and run for cover.

# NCB busts a 'Breaking Bad' plot, Tihar...

From page 2

The lab was located in Kasana Industrial Area of district Gautam Budh Nagar. The two, according to the officer, were instrumental in establishing the illegal factory, procuring chemicals required for manufacturing methamphetamine from various sources and importing the machinery. During a preliminary enquiry, it was revealed that a Delhi-based businessman, found at the factory during the raid, along with the Tihar Jail warden, was "instrumental" in establishing the illegal factory, procuring chemicals required for the drugs from various sources and importing the machinery, Singh said. As per the statement, chemicals like Acetone, Sodium Hydroxide, Methylene Chloride, Premium grade Ethanol, Toluene, Red phosphorus, Ethyl Acetate etc and imported machinery for manufacturing were also found. The Delhi Police's special cell also participated in the operation as the drug network had footprints across several places in NCR of Delhi.

The agency initially received a tip-off about the illegal laboratory being established in the national capital region (NCR) for the production of synthetic drugs like meth for export to other countries as well as consumption in India. Members of the Mexican cartel De Jalisco Nueva Generacion were also said to be involved. Singh said: "Acting on information that a laboratory had been established in NCR of Delhi for production of synthetic drugs like methamphetamine for export to other countries as well as consumption in India, in which members of Mexican CJNG drug cartel (Cartel De Jalisco Nueva Generación), are also involved, NCB conducted search operation in a factory in Kasana Industrial Area, Gautam Budh Nagar district October 25, 2024 and found about 95 kg of Methamphetamine in solid and liquid forms. Chemicals like Acetone, Sodium

The businessman had previously been arrested by Department of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) in an NDPS case and had been lodged in Tihar Jail where he came in contact with the Jail warden who became his accomplice, the statement revealed. According to the website of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) of the United States, Cartel De Jalisco Nueva Generación is one of the five most dangerous transnational criminal organisations in the world. It is responsible for trafficking tons of cocaine, methamphetamine, and fentanyl-laced heroin into the United States.

The agency claims to have busted at least five clandestine labs this year so far in Gandhinagar and Amreli in Gujarat, Jodhpur and Sirohi in Rajasthan and Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. In the Bhopal case, a joint operation was undertaken by the NCB and the Gujarat ATS at the Bagroda industrial estate and about 907 kg of mephedrone and 7,000 kg of some other chemicals, along with machinery, were seized. The NCB believes that considering the low cost of production of synthetic drugs like methamphetamine and mephedrone, the drug mafia is "increasingly shifting" to setting up such clandestine labs in industrial areas so that local law enforcement agencies are not alerted by the routine transportation of material and machinery, waste generated from the laboratories and toxic fumes coming out of chimneys during chemical processing.

# Disengagement process almost...

From page 1

The sources have said that patrolling will begin at these points once the disengagement that began last week is completed and both sides will move their respective troops and dismantle temporary structures. Eventually, they added, the areas and patrolling status is expected to be moved back to pre-April 2020 level.

The patrolling will be done by armed personnel and structures to be dismantled

include temporary sheds and tents, a source said. The process follows the agreement firmed up between the two countries on patrolling and disengagement of troops along the LAC in eastern Ladakh, a major breakthrough to end the over four-year standoff.

The ties between the two Asian countries had nosedived following a fierce clash in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on October 21 had said here that the agreement was finalised following negotiations over the past several weeks and that it would lead to a resolution of the issues that arose in 2020. On October 23, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and China President Xi Jinping endorsed the agreement on patrolling and disengagement along the LAC in eastern Ladakh during their bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Kazan in Russia.

# Noida man arrested for...

From page 1

The Mumbai police have so far arrested 15 persons from different parts of the country for Baba Siddique's murder which took place as it did in the run-up to the State Assembly polls, Salman Khan and his father Salim Khan have received multiple threats from the members of the gang run by incarcerated gangster Lawrence Bishnoi

It may be recalled that the Mumbai Police had some days ago arrested Shaikh Hussain

Shaikh Mausin (24), a vegetable seller from Jamshedpur, over a threat message received by Mumbai traffic police's WhatsApp helpline. Through his WhatsApp message, Shaikh Musin had demanded a Rs 5 crore ransom. Simultaneously, the police had arrested one Sukha alias Sukhbir Balbir Singh, the key accused in the case involving the conspiracy to kill Salman Khan. Sukha was arrested from Panipat in Haryana by a visiting team of Panvel police, was produced before a court at

Panvel in Navi Mumbai. Sukha was among the several persons arrested in connection with the shoot-out that took place near actor Salman Khan's residence. It may be recalled that on April 14, 2024, two unidentified motorcycle-borne miscreants, who were covering their faces with helmets, had opened four rounds of fire outside his Bandra (west) residence "Galaxy Apartment" in north-west Mumbai in the early hours of Sunday, before speeding away immediately after the shoot-out.

# Over 150 injured in fireworks accident at Kerala...

From page 1

The firecrackers were burst in the temple premises without any legal permission, and the accident happened due to its careless handling and negligence by the accused, police said. Eight people were booked, and four of them were taken into custody, a senior police officer said.

Though police earlier said that all those booked are temple committee members, they later clarified that one among them is a local man who burst firecrackers. The incident occurred as hundreds of people, including women and children, had gathered to have a glimpse of the Theyyam performance at the shrine.

Theyyam is a centuries-old ritualistic performance held at temples and 'kavus' (sacred

groves) in the Malabar (north Kerala) region of Kerala. The District Collector said on Tuesday that those who were seriously injured had 80 per cent burns.

He further said that according to a preliminary probe, the fireworks storage facility and the place where the crackers were being burst were close by. "The safety precautions were not taken. The requirement of maintaining a minimum distance of 100 meters between the two was not followed. No permission was taken either for storage of fireworks," he added. As per the latest official update, of the total 21 people admitted to the intensive care units, seven are under ventilator support, and one person is critically ill. Eyewitnesses said sparks from firecrackers fell on the rest of

the stocks stored nearby, leading to an explosion that scared away the people. The building also suffered serious damage. Its walls and roof were found broken down. Mobile phone footage, broadcast by television channels, showed hapless people getting scattered and running in panic after a thundering explosion and a ball of fire happened on one of the premises of the shrine. Over 154 people sustained serious and minor injuries in the accident, and at least 102 persons were seeking treatment in various hospitals in Kasaragod, Kannur, and Kozhikode districts and in Mangalore in neighbouring Karnataka, authorities said.

Mobile phone footage broadcast by television channels showed the severity of the accident and the

distress of the helpless crowd gathered at the village temple. In the footage, a large crowd could be seen gathered on one side of the temple, with a Theyyam artist, dressed in ritualistic red attire, performing amidst them.

A burst was heard, and a ball of fire and billowing smoke appeared on the other side of the shrine, an eyewitness recalled. People, including women and children, were seen scattering, running around, and urging others to move away. Many survivors said they were yet to recover from the shock and said they still had no clarity on what happened at midnight.

"We were watching Theyyam... Suddenly we heard a huge sound of explosion and fire at some distance. Luckily, we could move to a safer place," a

young man told TV channels on Tuesday. Everything was over within seconds. Several people suffered injuries in the stampede after the tragedy, said another eyewitness. Another man recounted the presence of a huge crowd near the shed where the crackers were stored. "A large number of people were present near the shed. It was really difficult for them to run away to safety when the explosion happened," he said.

A spark from a cracker burst might have fallen into the shed and ignited the heaps of crackers stored there, an elderly person said. A young man, who suffered minor injuries, said those who burst the firecrackers ignored the repeated warnings by people not to bust them near the shed. Lok Sabha member Raj Mohan Unnithan said about 1,500

people participated in the temple ritual last night. "Over 10,000 people were expected to take part in the continuing rituals at the temple on Tuesday. If the accident happened today, what would have been its gravity?," he told TV channels.

Unnithan also blamed temple committee members and the police for the display of fireworks and accused them of not taking any mandatory checks on the fireworks stock and explosives used in it. Meanwhile, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Tuesday said she was disturbed by the news of the firecracker accident. The Congress leader, in a post on social media platform X, said that her thoughts and prayers were with those injured in the incident and their families.







# ED conducts raid in money laundering probe against online betting and illegal IPL broadcast

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) said on Tuesday it has undertaken fresh searches in a money laundering case against a website that allegedly indulged in online betting on 2024 Lok Sabha election results apart from an illegal broadcast of IPL cricket matches. The action was taken against people providing technical and financial management support to the website named "Fairplay", which was allegedly involved in illegal activities.



Cash, bank deposits and silver bars worth about Rs 4 crore were seized along with various other "incriminating" documents, digital devices and immovable property-related documents during the raids conducted on October 25 in Mumbai and in Kutch in Gujarat, the ED said in a

statement. The money laundering case stems from an FIR of the Mumbai police cyber cell that was filed on the complaint of Viacom18 Media Pvt Limited against Fairplay Sport LLC and others for causing a loss of revenue of more than Rs 100 crore.

Caribbean Sea), Fair Play Sport LLC, Fairplay Management DMCC at Dubai and Play Ventures Holding Limited in Malta for the operations of the website, Fairplay is being "operated" from Dubai, the ED found. "Incriminating documents seized during the search show purchase of high value immovable and movable assets in India by the persons involved and this amounts to more than Rs 100 crore," the agency said. The ED has thrice earlier conducted raids in this case beginning from June and it had seized or frozen assets worth Rs 117 crore till now, including the latest action. It had earlier said that Fairplay was involved in "illegal broadcasting of cricket/IPL matches and various online betting activities including results of Lok Sabha Elections 2024".

# PM Modi unveils employment opportunities for youth at 'Rozgar Mela'

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Asserting that it is his government's commitment to providing employment to a maximum number of youngsters, Prime Minister Narendra Modi here said on Tuesday that a system is being created that gives opportunity to every youth and allows them to fulfil their aspirations. Addressing a 'Rozgar Mela' after distributing appointment letters for government jobs to over 51,000 people, he spoke of his government's efforts to boost the presence of new technologies and modern sectors such as space and semiconductors so that new employment opportunities are created. In his video address, Modi said earlier governments lacked in policy and intent, leading to India falling behind the world in rising sectors, including in modern technologies. Old and



outdated technologies used to be brought to the country, he added. "A mindset existed that believed modern technologies cannot develop in our country. This mindset did us a lot of harm," he said, stressing that if industries which generated employment in the modern world did not exist in the country, then creating new employment opportunities would be difficult. "We began work to rid the country of this old mindset of earlier governments," Modi said, adding that policies and decisions of the government

have a direct bearing on employment. The prime minister said it is his government's commitment to give jobs to the maximum number of people and cited the all-around infrastructure works such as the construction of expressways, highways, ports, rail networks and airports underway in the country. Water and gas pipelines are being laid, and schools and universities are being opened, he said, asserting that development works are not only giving facilities to people but also

creating employment opportunities. Highlighting his government's efforts to create more employment opportunities, he referred to the Production-linked Incentives (PLI) scheme to encourage domestic manufacturing. A massive investment is taking place, leading to the creation of record opportunities, Modi said. Over 1.5 lakh startups have been launched on this government's watch, he said, while also pointing to the paid internship programme for youngsters which seeks to induct over one crore youth over the next five years. India, Modi said, has entered into agreements with 21 countries to facilitate immigration and employment for Indian youths. He asked government officials to conduct themselves in a way that they are cited as an example the world over.

# PM Modi declares this Diwali historic



**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

This Diwali will be historic as after a 500-year wait thousands of lamps will be lit in the temple built on the birthplace of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya on the festival, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday. Modi said it would be a Diwali "when our Ram returns home" and this time the wait is over not after 14

years but after 500 years. The prime minister made the remarks after launching development projects worth nearly Rs 12,850 crore and extending his government's flagship health insurance scheme Ayushman Bharat to all senior citizens aged 70 years and above. An idol of Ram Lalla was consecrated at the Ayodhya temple in January this year, a landmark event led by Prime Minister Modi who had also given a clarion call to go beyond the grand temple's construction to build the foundation of a "strong, capable and divine" India of the next 1,000 years. Lakhs of people had watched the consecration ceremony on television in their homes and neighbourhood temples, savouring the historic moment.

# UP CM announces satellite AIIMS centre in Ghaziabad

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MEERUT/NEW DELHI**

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Tuesday a process is afoot to have a satellite centre of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Delhi in Ghaziabad. He said this centre would benefit the people of western Uttar Pradesh districts like Ghaziabad, Meerut, Bulandshahr and Hapur. Adityanath said this as he participated in the ninth All India Ayurveda Conference chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi through virtual medium from Meerut. "Today Uttar Pradesh has two AIIMS (Gorakhpur and Raebareilly). We have requested AIIMS Delhi to build a satellite centre in Ghaziabad that on land given by us, so that the residents of Hapur, Meerut, Ghaziabad,



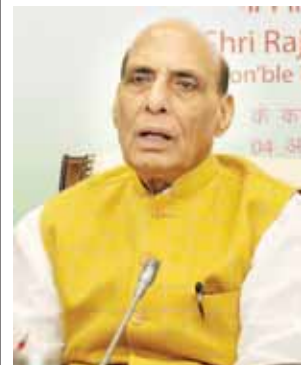
Bulandshahr can get the benefit of Delhi AIIMS facilities," an official statement quoted Adityanath as saying. "We will work to expand this programme soon," he added. The chief minister said people above 70 years of age will now get the benefit of the Ayushman scheme, which was launched on Tuesday by Modi. The prime minister inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of various

health sector projects worth about Rs 12,850 crore on the occasion of 9th Ayurveda Day in New Delhi earlier in the day. Apart from health related projects in various states, Modi also inaugurated the expansion of medical services and Jan Aushadhi Kendra at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi. Along with this programme, Adityanath, while addressing the foundation stone laying

ceremony of ESIC Hospital at Marshall Pitch, Kankarkheda, Meerut, said, "Meerut has emerged as a big infrastructure. Expressway, Rapid Rail have been found. Ganga Expressway is being built, go for Kumbh bath through this." Modi performed the virtual Bhoomi Pujan of the hospital. On this occasion, the chief minister said Meerut is making its mark in the world in sports under ODOP (One District-One Product). The state's sports university is being built in Meerut. When the sports university will be ready, it will produce Olympians and new players will be discovered and groomed, he said. Adityanath said the workers of Meerut will get facilities like the hospitals of Lucknow and Gorakhpur. He also said there were only 17 medical colleges in Uttar Pradesh till

2017, and after that they have been built or are being built in 64 of the 75 districts in the state. The chief minister said an Atal residential school has been built at every commissionerate for the children of workers. In this, work is being done for free study, accommodation and all-round development of the children. Adityanath said he himself has landed at the airstrip of Meerut because there is potential in Meerut. The biggest international airport will be built in Jewar and Meerut will get its benefit, he added. The chief minister said this will be the first Diwali after the Pran Pratishtha of Ramlala in Ayodhya. He appealed to the people and said on the arrival of Ramlala, lamps should be lit in your homes along with Ayodhya.

# Rajnath Singh calls for cleanliness drive at Ministry of Defence



**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday exhorted the officials in Ministry of Defence to contribute individually towards a few hours of shramdaan every week to maintain cleanliness at the workplace, emphasizing that a cleaner and decluttered workplace leads to enhanced productivity. He administered the swachhata pledge to officials in South Block and inspected the office premises, including the recently renovated corridor at Gate No. 09 and beautified courtyard. The defence minister also felicitated the Swachhata Veers whose tireless efforts have been crucial in maintaining hygiene and cleanliness of the South Block premises. The Campaign was conducted with a three-pronged approach of general upkeep and cleanliness drive with beautification of building, corridors and courtyards; weeding out of old records, scrapping and disposal of old equipment and furniture; and Clearance and redress of VIP references and grievances. The Ministry of Defence and its subordinate offices together conducted Swachhata Abhiyan at 3,832 locations/sites across the country. The overarching thrust of the Campaign has been on gainful utilization of available resources and generation of revenue from disposal of scrap. Keeping with this spirit, obsolete office equipment/IT equipment in the organizations were condemned and revenue was generated by way of their disposal during the Campaign. More than 2.81 Lakh square feet of space has been freed pan India for better pan India for better utilization. A total of 36,444 physical files has been reviewed. 169 public grievances on CPGRAMS and 45 MP/VIP references have been addressed during the Campaign.

# EAM urges military leadership to adapt to evolving geopolitical threats

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday urged the military leadership to be prepared to adapt to rapidly evolving geopolitical threats and opportunities. He also emphasised that a more "whole-of-government" approach is needed to effectively advance national security. He said this in his address at the closing day of the second phase of the Army Commanders' Conference 2024 that witnessed the Indian Army's senior leadership deliberating on critical strategic issues affecting both border security and the hinterland. The conference happened at a time when troop disengagement at the two friction points at Demchok and Depsang Plains in eastern Ladakh is in its "final stages", following a key agreement signed between India and China. Jaishankar's address was themed -- 'Global and Geopolitical Intricacies: Opportunities for India and Expectations from the Armed Forces'.



Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi shared the dais with the Union minister. In a social media post, Jaishankar wrote, "Pleased to address the Army Commanders Conference in Delhi today. Discussed the intricacies of current geopolitics, as well as its challenges, possibilities and opportunities. Urged that a more 'whole of the Government' approach is needed to effectively advance national security." The Ministry of Defence later issued a statement on the conference, saying it reaffirmed the Indian Army's unwavering commitment to readiness and adaptability, as

the senior leadership "resolved to accelerate ongoing transformational initiatives" and actively contribute to various national endeavours. Emphasising a forward-looking approach, the Indian Army remains fully dedicated to preparing for present and emerging challenges, ensuring a progressive, resilient, and future-ready force aligned with India's strategic interests, it said. The external affairs minister underscored the intricate global and geopolitical dynamics that impact India and highlighted the country's expectations from the armed

forces and the preparedness required to address the "contradictions and challenges of the current world order", it said. He spoke of the Indian Army remaining vigilant, and "urged the leadership to be prepared to adapt to rapidly evolving geopolitical threats and opportunities and emphasised the importance of technological advancements and the lessons drawn from ongoing global conflicts in shaping India's strategic posture". Over the last two days, the Indian Army's senior hierarchy engaged in in-depth discussions on operational and administrative issues. Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan has addressed the gathering, reflecting on the recent success of the Joint Commanders' Conference in Lucknow. Reviewing the current security situation, General Chauhan stressed the importance of jointness and the roadmap for enhanced integration across domains, which is critical for future warfare and effective operations.

# EC dismisses Congress allegations on Haryana poll irregularities

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

The Election Commission on Tuesday rejected allegations levelled by the Congress over irregularities in the just-held Haryana assembly polls, saying the party was raising "the smoke of a generic doubt" about the credibility of an entire electoral outcome like it did in the past. The poll panel has also warned the grand old party, asking it to refrain from "baseless allegations" election after election. The poll panel said that "once again", it was compelled to note that with "no evidence whatsoever" of any statutory electoral step being compromised, the Congress has "once again raised the smoke of a generic doubt" about the credibility of an entire electoral outcome "exactly in a similar manner as it has done in recent past". "This is least expected of a national political party. The Commission appreciates the criticism of the considered views of political parties in sustaining and strengthening electoral democracy in the country and assures that it will remain committed



towards timely grievance redressal. At the same time, the Commission sincerely urges INC to take firm and concrete steps, matching with the party's long and illustrious standing, to amend their afore stated approach and in doing so set an example for emulation by one and all to responsibly conduct themselves at sensitive electoral stages so as to avoid possibilities of precipitation of public unrest and chaos," the EC said in its order. The Congress had made several complaints to the EC, including allegations of a slowdown in the vote counting process on October 8, the day results of the Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir elections were declared. The Congress had

also sought clarification on display of 99% battery status on the control units (CU) of electronic voting machines (EVM), during counting in some polling stations of 26 assembly constituencies. The Commission said "It is needless to remind that such frivolous and unfounded doubts have the potential of creating turbulence when crucial steps like polling and counting are in live play, a time when both public and political parties' anxiousness is peaking. The communications carrying baseless allegations were often widely publicized by INC even before receipt of any formal letter in the ECI and mostly coinciding with peak of electoral cycle i.e., near to or on poll day or counting day".

# Run for unity marks tribute to Indian unifier: Amit Shah

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Tuesday efforts were made to erase and undermine Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's enormous contribution to the country and he was deprived of Bharat Ratna for a long time. Flagger off 'Run for Unity' here ahead of the birth anniversary of Patel, the minister said it was due to the foresightedness and acumen of the country's first home minister that over 550 princely states were merged with the Union of India and the country became united. He said it was because of Sardar Patel that the Lakshadweep Islands,



Junagarh, Hyderabad and all other princely states were merged with India. "But there were efforts to erase and undermine the enormous contribution of Sardar Patel to the country. He was also deprived of Bharat Ratna for a long time,"

Shah said while addressing participants at the Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium. Prime Minister Narendra Modi installed the tallest statue of Patel in Kevadia, honoured him in a befitting manner and has kept his

memory alive, he said. Modi inaugurated Patel's 182-metre statue - Statue of Unity - at Kevadia in Gujarat in 2018. He laid the foundation stone for the project in 2013 when he was the Gujarat chief minister. Shah said Sardar Patel's vision, ideas and message in every field have been given a concrete shape by Prime Minister Modi. Sardar Patel was bestowed with Bharat Ratna -- the country's highest civilian award -- posthumously in 1991, 41 years after his death in 1950. Shah said the people of the country are now united and have dedicated themselves to fulfilling the prime minister's dream of turning India into a

fully developed nation by 2047. "The prime minister has put forth before all countrymen the pledge to build a fully developed India by 2047, which would be at the top of the ladder in every field in the world," he said. He said now India stands before the world as a flourishing, developing and strong nation. The home minister said India stands strong before the world on the path of becoming the leader in every field, and its foundation was laid by Sardar Patel. "The great ideas of Sardar Patel will definitely become a guiding light for the young generation of the country," he said. Shah called upon citizens to

take a pledge to strengthen the unity of India through the 'Run for Unity' and to realise the dream of a fully developed India by 2047. The home minister said the 'Run for Unity' is normally organised on October 31, the birth anniversary of Patel. But this year, it was organised two days ahead as Deepawali is falling on that day, he said. "Today is Dhanteras and we are organising the run on this auspicious occasion," the home minister said. The Modi government has been observing October 31 as 'Rashtriya Ekta Diwas' or National Unity Day since 2014 to foster and reinforce its dedication to preserving and strengthening the unity, integrity and security of the

nation. Patel was born on October 31, 1875, at Nadiad in Gujarat. As India's first home minister and deputy prime minister, Patel is credited for the merger of over 550 princely states into the Union of India. Various programmes, recalling Sardar Patel's contribution to unifying India, are being organised as part of the National Unity Day celebrations. Last week, Shah announced that the government would commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel with a two-year-long nationwide programme from 2024 to 2026 to honour his monumental contribution to the country.



# Ayodhya prepares for historic Deepotsav with three Guinness World Records in the making

**BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■**  
AYODHYA

The holy city of Ayodhya is set to celebrate a historic Deepotsav, marking the first festival since the Pran Pratishtha (consecration) of Ramlala. This year, Ayodhya aims to achieve three Guinness World Records, a feat symbolic of its grandeur and spiritual significance. On Wednesday, the festival will witness an unprecedented lighting of 25 lakh diyas (earthen lamps), a simultaneous Maha Aarti by 1,100 priests on the Saryu riverbanks, and a breathtaking display of eco-friendly "green" fireworks at the Saryu bridge. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will also join the Maha Aarti, with the first rehearsal for this remarkable event held on the banks of the

Saryu on Monday night. In anticipation of the massive influx of pilgrims and dignitaries, security has been ramped up throughout Ayodhya. Security forces, including over 200 STF, ATS, and CRPF commandos, are deployed across the temple premises and surrounding areas. Technical surveillance has been enhanced, and plainclothes intelligence agents are stationed at key points to monitor for potential disturbances. A multi-layered security setup is in place, employing bomb detectors, dog squads, face recognition technology, and drones for real-time monitoring. Verification of guests at local hotels, lodges, and dharamshalas has also been conducted to ensure public safety. SSP Rajkaran Nayyar con-



firmed the extensive security arrangements, emphasizing a strict response to any disturbances. Armed personnel will also be positioned along the route of the processions, with security forces having undergone multiple training sessions to maintain order while interacting cordially with devotees. Security has been reinforced at the district borders, with a rigorous checking of vehicles from nearby regions. Various points throughout Ayodhya Dham are under heightened surveillance to preempt security threats. As the three-day Deepotsav began on Monday, Ayodhya dazzled onlookers with its grand two-kilometer decoration. From Udaya Chowk to Nayaghat, and Dharampath to Saryu Bridge, the city's historical essence is reawakened

through vibrant laser shows and cultural performances, captivating thousands. **Ayodhya transformed into Ramnagari** The city has been transformed into a Ram-centric nagri, resounding with bhajans, devotional and of Lord Ram. By Wednesday evening, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will illuminate a diya at Ram Ki Paidi, igniting a total of 29 lakh lamps across Ayodhya, casting the city in radiant light. From Ram Ki Paidi to Saryu Ghat and Ram Katha Park, the cityscape mirrors the reverent era of Treta Yuga. Thousands of students are creating a decorative garland of lamps at Ram Ki Paidi, adding to the enchantment with a laser show depicting the Ramayana, allowing visitors a glimpse into the epic tale.

Decorative arches, grand gates, and hoardings along the main highway enhance the Deepotsav ambiance, while traditional folk culture is also prominently featured. On the auspicious day, Bharatkund, a mythological site associated with Bharat, Lord Ram's devoted brother, will also be adorned with 25,000 diyas. For this purpose, 700 volunteers from six schools have been designated, with Shri Bharat Intermediate College serving as the nodal school to orchestrate a grand event. The spirit of Ayodhya's Deepotsav, infused with reverence, historical significance, and unity, promises an unforgettable spectacle for devotees and visitors alike. This year's festivities are anticipated to set a new standard, embedding Ayodhya's Deepotsav in the annals of history.

## PM Modi to visit Gujarat to participate in Rashtriya Ekta Diwas celebrations

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Gujarat on October 30-31 during which he will participate in Rashtriya Ekta Diwas celebrations, and inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of various development projects worth over Rs 280 crore. During the visit, the prime minister will also address the Officer Trainees of the 99th Common Foundation Course in Aarambh 6.0. On October 30, he will travel to Ekta Nagar, Kevadia, where at around 5:30 pm, he will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of various infrastructural and development projects worth over Rs 280 crore, a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said here on Tuesday.



Thereafter, at around 6 pm, Modi will address the Officer Trainees of the 99th Common Foundation Course in Aarambh 6.0. The theme for this year's programme is 'Roadmap for Aatmanirbhar and Viksit Bharat'. The 99th Common Foundation Course -

The Prime Minister will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of projects in Ekta Nagar aimed to enhance the tourist experience, improve accessibility and support sustainability initiatives in the area. Modi will administer the Ekta Diwas pledge and witness Ekta Diwas Parade which will comprise 16 marching contingents from nine states and one UT police, four Central Armed Police Forces, NCC and a marching band. Special attractions will include Hell March contingent of NSG, daredevil show by BSF and CRPF women and men bikers, a show on combination of Indian Martial Arts by BSF, piped band show by school children, 'Surya Kiran' flypast by Indian Air Force, among others, the statement said.

Aarambh 6.0 - includes 653 Officer Trainees from across 16 civil services of India and three civil services of Bhutan. On October 31, at around 7:15 am, Prime Minister Modi will offer floral tribute at the Statue of Unity, which will be followed by Rashtriya Ekta Diwas celebrations.

## UP by-election heats up as Mayawati accuses BJP, Congress of anti-dalit conspiracy

**BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■**  
LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh by-election has reached a fever pitch, as BSP Chief Mayawati, in a strong statement, accused the BJP and Congress of being "two sides of the same coin" and alleged a conspiracy to divide the Dalit community through new reservation policies. She claimed that after Haryana, Telangana, and Karnataka governments have hurriedly implemented "reservation within reservation" systems, which she warned could fragment the Dalit community. "Casteist parties like BJP, Congress, and SP pose a threat to the unity of Dalits," Mayawati said. "To protect the legacy of Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, we must remain vigilant against the divisive tactics of these parties." She urged her supporters to stay



alized communities in politics. Adding to the pre-election fervor, Samajwadi Party (SP) Chief Akhilesh Yadav took to X (formerly Twitter) to criticize the UP government's management of law enforcement, citing internal discord within the state police. He wrote, "Such is the condition of UP police: FIR of police, against police," highlighting what he sees as a breakdown in law and order. With the scrutiny of nomination papers concluded, the picture for the by-election is now clearer. Out of the 149 filed nominations, 54 have been rejected, with Muzaffarnagar's Meerapur seat witnessing the highest rejection — 22 nominations were disqualified. In Phulpur, an FIR has been lodged against SP candidate Mujtaba Siddiqui under the SC/ST Act, adding further complexity to the election dynamics.

Congress-led states proves they share the same stance on reservation, which she contends is detrimental to the principles of social justice upheld by Dr. Ambedkar. Mayawati urged vigilance, particularly against tactics like "Saam, Daam, Dand, Bhed" (negotiation, incentives, punishment, and division), which she claims are used to undermine the influence of margin-

## Police arrest eight cadres of banned outfit UNLFP in Manipur

**PTI ■ IMPHAL**

The police have arrested eight members of the banned United National Liberation Front of Manipur (Pambei) for allegedly threatening residents and obstructing the land demarcation process in Thoubal district, police said in a statement on Tuesday. Police recovered a substantial cache of arms and ammunition from the suspects, including five AK-47 assault rifles, one M-16 rifle, and a 9mm pistol, the statement said. The arrest highlighted growing concerns among security agencies regarding escalating violence linked to the UNLFP, despite the group having signed a ceasefire agreement with the Union government last November. The UNLFP, led by Kh Pambei, became the first Meitei armed group in the Imphal Valley to enter into a ceasefire agreement with the government on November 29, 2023. This agreement was aimed at renouncing violence, yet officials have criticised the group for failing to provide a list of its cadres who were expected to surrender their weapons. The arrested individuals have been identified as Laishram Atangba Meitei alias Ningthoujao (24), Leishangthem Nongpok Meitei alias Singajit (26), Thongam Khangakpa Meitei alias Jatra (45), Thiyam Ningthou Meitei alias Ingocha (46), Akoijam Thoupangba Meitei alias Thoiba (24), Thounaojam Sugnu Ngakpa alias Yaiphaba Meitei (26), Ngasepam Nongthouba Meitei alias Romio (40), and Sorokhaibam Nanganba alias Dayananda Singh (27). According to the police, these individuals were involved in illegal activities involving sophisticated firearms. The police also seized 16 mobile phones and a Sports Utility Vehicle during the operation. Security agencies have raised alarms over the UNLFP's violent actions against both law enforcement and civilians, which have persisted since the ceasefire agreement. Notably, UNLFP members



have been accused of participating in violent incidents, including looting of arms from the 5th India Reserve Battalion in February. Additionally, police apprehended a cadre from the proscribed People's Liberation Army in Imphal West for allegedly involved in extortion. Despite the tense atmosphere in Manipur, police reported that the situation has remained under control over the past 24 hours, with security forces conducting search operations in vulnerable areas. Authorities have increased security along National Highways 37 and 2 to ensure the safe passage of vehicles, especially those carrying essential goods. In light of recent events, the police have urged the public not to succumb to rumours and have called for the return of any looted arms and ammunition. Intelligence reports indicate that UNLFP members have been establishing camps in areas predominantly inhabited by the Kuki population, raising fears of targeted violence against the tribal community. Despite the ceasefire aimed at curbing hostilities, incidents have shown that UNLFP cadres continue to operate freely, armed and seemingly beyond the reach of law enforcement. The ongoing ethnic clashes between the Meitei and Kuki communities have resulted in over 200 fatalities since May last year, underscoring the urgent need for lasting peace in the region. The UNLFP, founded in 1964, has a long history of insurgency in both Indian and neighbouring territories. The Centre has previously engaged with various armed groups in the Northeast to promote peace and development.

## Ranjath Singh exhorts innovators to build products which can become necessity for armed forces

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday exhorted innovators and start-ups to come up with products, which can become a necessity for the Armed Forces. He also said the government's self-reliance efforts have made science, technology and innovation a revolutionary idea in the country. He made these assertions during Naval Innovation and Indigenisation Organisation (NIO) seminar 'Swavlamban' at Bharat Mandapam. The defence minister also unveiled the third edition of Acing Development of Innovative Technologies with iDEX

(ADITI 3.0) challenge and 13th edition of Defence India Start-up Challenges (DISC 13). Citing the success of digital transactions, Rajnath stated that today India has emerged as the world's largest country in terms of the value of digital payments. He also spoke of the Jan Dhan, Aadhaar and Mobile Trinity, which has made the delivery of government schemes easy and transparent. "You don't wait for the right time, you bring the right time. You're fully capable. You must come up with new ideas through innovation," he said, assuring all possible help of the government in this endeavour.



The ADITI 3.0 features a challenge from the Indian Navy to design a High-Power Microwave Weapon System. The DISC 13 presents seven challenges - three from

Indian Army and two each from Indian Navy and Indian Air Force - in the domains of Artificial Intelligence, military communication and autonomous bots among oth-

ers. The defence minister highlighted the self-reliance efforts being made by the Government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, stating that the changes brought about in the last few years have created an innovative culture in India, keeping national security in mind. Acknowledging the vital contribution of both public and private sectors in realising the vision of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat', Rajnath reasserted the Government's commitment to march ahead on the road to progress by taking all the stakeholders together. "Continuous Innovation," he said. The defence minister added

that the Government's concerted efforts have not only reduced import dependency and ensured public and private sectors to work together for 'Aatmanirbharta' in defence, it has also resulted in the emergence of science, technology, innovation and self-reliance as a revolutionary idea throughout the country. Speaking on the occasion, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi reiterated the Indian Navy's commitment to safeguard national maritime interests, adding that to facilitate this journey, a solemn resolve has been made to become a 'Fully Aatmanirbhar Force' by 2047.

## India, Spain must contribute in building open, secure Indo-Pacific: Pedro Sanchez

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**

Underlining the need to protect freedom of navigation amid assertiveness of Beijing in the South China Sea, Pedro Sanchez, President of the Government of Spain, on Tuesday said his country and India must contribute in building an Indo-Pacific region that is open and secure. Speaking at an event organised by the Spain-India Forum and the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) in Mumbai, Sanchez maintained that the rules-based international order is at stake and hence Madrid and New Delhi must defend and work towards strengthening multilateral institutions. He said the world's centre of power has shifted towards Asia where India plays a key role. Sanchez announced that Spain is working to launch a new strategy for Asia which will revitalize his country's relations with the largest continent in the world. The central Indo-Pacific region accounts for 36 per cent of the world's GDP, pointed out the Spanish leader who is on an official visit to India. He said the vital region accounts for 60 per cent of world population and 50 per cent of global maritime trade which faces security challenges such as piracy, terrorism, natural disasters, arms and drug trafficking and illegal fishing. As this region has significant



strategic natural resources such as oil, fisheries, and critical mineral reserves, security challenges are more significant here, Sanchez pointed out. "We must, therefore, protect freedom of navigation and overflight. India and Spain must contribute to a secure Indo-Pacific," he said. Sanchez maintained that to ensure peaceful existence among countries, principles like territorial integrity and sovereignty of nations must be abided by. He said India and Spain must work together in areas like the protection of civilians and delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need, and defence of human rights and democracy. Sanchez said Artificial Intelligence (AI) has extraordinary potential, but stressed the need to calculate the risk of misuse of this transformative technology. "As our countries improve their technological capabilities, AI cooperation

can transform key sectors. It can also help address challenges related to the spread of false information that threaten our democracies," Sanchez noted. International cooperation in AI is essential for a safer, more egalitarian and open world, emphasised the visiting Spanish leader. "AI must be ethical. We must establish strong ethical standards and accountability mechanisms to ensure that it respects human rights and promotes social good," he added. "We should all participate in the establishment of this comprehensive framework for the global governance of digital technology and AI," Sanchez said. In order to do so, building AI capacity in the Global South is critical. This involves creating a global network of AI research and development centres, providing targeted training programmes and ensuring access to high performing computing resources, he observed.



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## Irregularities in conduct of exam for Gujarat HC: Delhi HC asks NTA to file detailed affidavit

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The Delhi High Court has directed the National Testing Agency (NTA) to file a detailed affidavit on a plea alleging gross irregularities in the tender process for the conduct of an examination for recruitment of various posts in the Gujarat high court. The petitioner SKS Visions and its proprietor Sonu Goel, represented by senior advocate Pinaki Misra and assisted by advocates Anurag Chandra, Raj Kamal and Rohit Raman among others challenged the NTA in the recent tendering process for the recruitment in the Gujarat high court. In the writ petition, it was alleged that there were substantial procedural irregularities in the tender dated October 15 2024 issued for "Hiring of experienced agencies firms" to provide ancillary security services on turnkey basis during Offline examination conducted by the NTA in Gujarat on pilot basis. The petitioner alleged that the tender was issued with minimal notice, providing inadequate time for bid submissions, and that it favoured a pre-qualified bidder "Sai Educare Pvt Ltd", compromising transparency and accountability in public procurement. Noting the gravity of the allegations, the Delhi high court directed the NTA to submit a detailed affidavit justifying its

tender allocation process. The petition claimed specific violations by the NTA, including deviation from Central Vigilance Commission guidelines in which the NTA reportedly accepted offline bids in place of the standard online bidding mechanism, thereby undermining transparency. The NTA also lacked adherence to General Financial Rules (GFR) as it allegedly circumvented essential protocols, such as employing a single-packet bid system rather than the mandatory two-packet system for complex tenders, thereby bypassing comprehensive technical evaluation, the plea alleged. The petition claimed the NTA allegedly caused a loss of over Rs 75 lakh to the public exchequer. The testing agency is also allegedly accused of not conducting a pre-bid conference despite the technical complexities, a key procedural lapse that purportedly affected the tender's integrity, it said.



The petitioner sought a directive from the court to set aside the tender allocation, citing a violation of Article 14 of the Constitution, which mandates fairness and transparency by the state or its instrumentalities. During the hearing, the NTA counsel admitted that it was the testing agency's decision to release the short tender on October 15. The petitioner, however, stated that relying on NTA Public Notice dated September 27, NTA itself published that the notification by Gujarat High Court to conduct exam was notified in the month of May, which is five months before the October 15 public notice. Notwithstanding the importance of the examination to be conducted, NTA deliberately chose not to publish the tender in time and chose to publish it online in October giving a 24-hour window to submit the bid offline, which can easily be manipulated and lacks transparency, the petitioner alleged. The plea also highlighted that the NTA did not publish the tender online or through mandatory GeM portal just to avoid transparency and accountability in order to allegedly favour the bidder "Sai Educare Pvt Ltd". After the hearing, the Delhi high court directed the NTA to file a comprehensive affidavit detailing their stand and addressing the allegations.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Delhi water woes

Political blame game erupts as toxic ammonia levels in Yamuna spark crisis and residents are supplied with unpotable water

As images of a frothy Yamuna flooded the media, Delhiites were shocked and alarmed. Pollution levels in the river have soared beyond what anyone could have imagined. This has disrupted the Delhi water supply and Delhiites are forced to consume polluted water. Delhi is in the grips of a severe water crisis as elevated ammonia levels in the Yamuna River disrupt water supply across the capital. With water treatment plants at Sonia Vihar and Bhagirathi struggling to manage the contamination, residents face widespread shortages. The AAP and BJP have engaged in a heated blame game, with the AAP accusing the BJP-led Haryana government of neglecting pollution controls upstream, while the BJP criticizes Delhi's administration for failing to bolster treatment facilities. As political tensions rise, Delhiites are left hoping for swift, actionable solutions to restore their water supply. The ammonia levels in the Yamuna have surged to nearly 0.9 parts per million (ppm), far exceeding the safe limit of 0.5 ppm required for effective treatment. This spike is severely affecting the functionality of the Sonia Vihar and Bhagirathi water treatment plants (WTPs), which play a pivotal role in providing clean water to the city. When the Upper Ganga Canal—Delhi's primary source of clean water—is closed for annual maintenance, as it was from October 12 to 31, the city becomes increasingly reliant on the Yamuna, compounding the water scarcity problem. Amid mounting public dissatisfaction, the political sparring has escalated. The AAP has blamed the BJP-led Haryana government, accusing it of being 'hostile' towards Delhi's interests by failing to curb the industrial waste entering the Yamuna. AAP officials claim that Haryana's callous attitude has left Delhi residents without a reliable water supply, with no proactive steps being taken to control the pollutants entering the river. On the other hand, the BJP's Delhi unit responded by holding AAP accountable for the water crisis, criticising the Kejriwal administration for what they call "mismanagement." They say that the AAP government has failed in two major areas: maintaining operational sewage treatment plants and equipping existing WTPs, such as those at Sonia Vihar and Dwarka, with the capacity to handle ammonia contamination. Indeed it is a classic case of passing the buck and Delhi has had enough of it. Rather than blaming each other both Delhi and Haryana government would do well to mitigate this disaster. The Yamuna water is coming from Haryana so no two opinions about where the source of contamination is but AAP should have managed the situation well as it new well in advance that Uppar Ganga Canal would be closed for the maintenance till October 31. Right now water remains the biggest concern for Delhi. Yamuna is no better than a drain. Apart from being visually appalling it is a health hazard and the water being supplied is not fit for bathing let alone drinking. But is anybody listening?



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### PICTALK



A Vendor sell flowers ahead of the Diwali festival, at the Ghazipur flower market in Delhi

PTI

## The forgotten legacy of Odisha's unsung iron lady

Pallavi Rebbapragada unveils Nandini Satpathy's profound journey of resilience and lasting impact in her book 'Nandini Satpathy, The Iron Lady of Orissa'

Women have played a critical and active role in shaping the political future of India. But unless they have risen to positions of power, most of them have remained unsung and forgotten. It is then a paradox that Nandini Satpathy, one such spunky politician who governed her state of Odisha as its first woman chief minister and never lost an election as a member of the legislative assembly, faded out of not just public memory but also found little or no mention in many official records of her time in office. Why is so little known about Satpathy, the astute politician who legislated several groundbreaking state land reforms and was a passionate conservationist, poet and author? Despite being a Rajya Sabha member and minister of Information and Broadcasting in former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's cabinet, why was her legacy largely confined to her family and friends? Was she deliberately isolated because she dared to oppose the imposition of the Emergency despite being a trusted friend and



close aide of Indira Gandhi? Did this step sound the death knell for Satpathy's association with Indira Gandhi? Answers to these questions can be found in Pallavi Rebbapragada's well-researched book on the second woman to become chief minister of a state in India. Titled 'Nandini Satpathy, The Iron Lady of Orissa', Rebbapragada, a journalist and public policy consultant, chronicles the story of a girl who first defied odds to be born and then, went on to show not just Cuttack, the city where she was born, but also her state and the country that her birth would one day herald new beginnings. The first time she made her presence publicly known was when she did the unthinkable by pulling down the Union Jack flag atop

her Ravenshaw college and hoisting the national flag. Satpathy, then just 15, showed no remorse even though she was imprisoned by the British police for this act of defiance. It was also to be a turning point in her personal life. It was in jail that she met activist Devendra Satpathy whom she later married. While she accomplished several milestones during her stint in office including the setting up of the Free Bangla Radio as I&B minister in Indira Gandhi's first government during Bangladesh's struggle for independence, her contribution when out of power is no less significant. Except perhaps for students of law, not many know about her case. PL Dani, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Vigilance, led to a historic 1978 Supreme Court judgment that expanded the scope of the right against self-incrimination and provided guidelines for police interrogation, ensuring individuals could not be compelled to provide evidence against themselves at any stage. This came about when Satpathy, then former Chief

Minister of Odisha, refused to answer certain questions invoking her right against self-incrimination under Article 20(3) of the Constitution when she was called for police interrogation in connection with a corruption case. The police contended that her refusal to answer questions constituted an offence under Section 179 of the Indian Penal Code. The case reached the Supreme Court and paved the way for reaffirmation of the Right to Silence as a fundamental right, protecting individuals from being compelled to answer incriminating questions during police interrogation and the Right to Legal Assistance allowing individuals to consult with a legal practitioner before answering any questions during police interrogation, promoting fair treatment and safeguarding against coercive practices. Importantly, the judgment continues to remain a key reference today for ensuring the protection of individual rights during the investigative process. (The writer is a social activist and freelance writer; views are personal)



SWAPNA MAJUMDAR

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## A mirage of progress on the LAC

The path to restoring the status quo appears fraught, with divergent interpretations between the two countries clouding any clear progress



ASHOK K MEHTA

The 21st October Agreement to disengage from Demchok and Depsang and resume patrolling as in April 2020, is being hailed as a breakthrough. It's not quite that: now Indian soldiers have to inform the Chinese of the timetable for patrolling and grazing. The government has called this disengagement as a pathway to return to conditions on the ground that existed in April 2020. It is also hoped this will lead to the disengagement of troops deployed in buffer zones, de-escalation, de-induction and return to status quo ante (RSQA) in April 2020. This is wishful thinking. COAS, Gen Dwivedi has expressed fear that the Chinese may encroach into buffer zones, so low is the trust factor. He has called the latest disengagement a 'low hanging fruit'. But the government has given the impression as if RSQA is around the corner. Far from it. From day one after the intrusions had taken place government has covered LAC in a smokescreen: making unilateral statements and blocking debate in parliament as it would undermine troop morale. But PM Modi's famous statement after Galwan that no one came in and no one is in, took the cake. The government has banned former COAS Gen Naravan's book Four Stars of Destiny as it removes some of the smoke screen. India has its interpretation of the 21st October Agreement and China its own. There were no joint statements after the Agreement and Modi-Xi Jinping bilateral on 24 October. The Chinese readout of the 21st October Agreement and the bilateral are different from India's like chalk from cheese. In the Agreement, the Chinese say: "two sides have reached a solution to relevant issues which has been evaluated positively. In the next step China will work with India to implement above solution". There is no mention of RSQA April 2020, and no details of "the solution" and "relevant issues". Similarly, on the bilateral which was scheduled for 45 minutes (more than half the time is taken up in translation) Indian readout mentions "complete disengage-



ment"; "properly handling differences and disputes"; "Special Representatives would meet to resolve border dispute". China's readout: "two sides agreed on holding talks between Foreign Ministers and officials to bring relationship back to sound and steady development at early date"; "it notes progress and development on both sides and in border areas and recommends more communication and cooperation" ... in short China has shown a vague inclination to implement border agreement. For China border talks and bilateral relations are separate issues. For India normalcy on the border is linked to bilateral relations. Positions are poles apart. As there is no road map to RSQA with timelines, one will never know the progress on the three Ds: Disengagement, De-escalation and De-induction. Chinese will engage in endless military and diplomatic talks, making India the supplicant. We will continue to grope in the dark as we have for the last five years about the situation along the LAC. For example, no one knew about the establishment of a Buffer Zone on Kailash Heights after we foolishly vacated it till Ladakhi graziers revealed that the Rezangla Memorial and other man-made forms had been obliterated. The loss of patrolling and grazing rights was revealed at a police conference where an



LAST TIME VERIFICATION OF THE STATUS OF THE GALWAN POST RESULTED IN A HORRIFIC MEDIEVAL CLASH WHICH LED TO THE QUESTION OF NEW PROTOCOLS/ AGREEMENTS. WILL TROOPS BE ARMED AND HAVE AMMUNITION IN THEIR CHARGERS?

ITBP officer mentioned losing 26 of 65 patrolling sites. The government has said frequently Chinese had amassed troops in violation of border protocols and "attempted to alter status quo". They have altered it. True, there is a difference in the perception of LAC; there is no mutually recognised LAC but an Indian and Chinese perception of it. One precaution above all is paramount. Go by Chinese deeds, not their words, and verify before trust. Last time verification of the status of the Galwan post resulted in a horrific medieval clash which led to the question of new protocols/agreements. Will troops be armed and have ammunition in their chargers? Former NSA Shivshankar Menon had suggested that a new modus vivendi is required for restoring trust as the one agreed between Rajiv Gandhi and Deng Xiaopeng after the Sumdorongchu imbroglio that took ten years to resolve but compared to intrusions in East Ladakh it was a single point intrusion. The government has a fair idea of the framework agreement China calls 'solution' and India's 'RSQA'. It must share it with Parliament as any agreement on full disengagement must not create a 2017 Doklam-like situation where the Chinese hoodwinked India and Bhutan and established full control over the

plateau- with fortifications, infrastructure and dual-use villages- which leads to the Siliguri corridor. India has gone cold over its treaty commitment with Bhutan even as Thimphu was on its way to clinching a Doklam package deal with China which would have been a big strategic setback for India. Our non-strategic economists must be cautious about Chinese FDI contrary to what the Chief Economic Advisor has suggested - a carte blanche inflow of FDI. It must be verified case by case as per Press Note 3. Ban on Chinese apps must stay and Chinese 5G, 6G, Huawei and ZTE blocked. The trade deficit with China has rocketed to USD 105bn which is more than India's defence budget of 2025-26. What India has achieved on the LAC is just a baby step in the restoration of RSQA in April 2020. Chinese have obliged in disengaging from Demchok and Depsang friction points because these pre-date the April 2020 intrusions. Let India not be under any illusion that it has overpowered Chinese coercion through deterrence. Far from it. (The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. The views expressed are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Who cares about Delhi air pollution?



propos news item, "AAP, BJP spar over plunging air quality", published on Oct. 28, this is my response. Like every year, the national capital is under the spell of air pollution at the start of winter this year. The air quality of Delhi and cities in the National Capital Region (NCR) has reached the

poor and very poor categories. The cause of Delhi's severe air pollution is primarily due to geographical and local factors. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), because of the calm winds, the polluted gases, smoke, and dust particles spread in the local environment are not spreading to distant places and are polluting the local air. Adding to the woes, Delhi's toxic air is caused by vehicles and industrial emissions. Stopping trucks from plying within Delhi city limits between 6 AM and 6 PM, doing construction activities with proper draping, enforcing a total ban on bursting fire-crackers, and moving brick kilns outside Delhi are some of the means by which the local government can fix the air-pollution problem. Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

malpractices.

The incident raised alarm about the commonness of such practices, especially with essential ingredients like ghee, which holds a lot of nutritional value in Indian households. This scandal is a portentous event and a wake-up call for stricter regulations, increased food examination, and heightened public awareness to corroborate safety in the food sector. Neha Tomar | Ujjain

#### FOLLOW THE PROCESS

Madam — M S Dhoni very often in his post match presentations used to emphasize 'the importance of following the process right'. As the saying goes 'all that starts well ends well'. In the Bangalore when the sky is over cast after having lost the first day's play in a rain affected pitch which was visibly moist, Rohit opting to bat after winning the toss was more than a gamble and without application of mind. Here the absence of experienced Ravi Shastri or a mentor like personality Rahul Dravid was felt. The score of 46 all out was a morale sapping innings and los-

ing the first test despite scoring 400 plus runs in the second innings was because of the fact that the team never recovered from the first innings shock. In the Pune test again a fourth spinner, in the place of a second pace bowler, an Axar Patel who can bowl flattish deliveries like Santner would have made much difference and Axar can also score some useful runs when the chips are down. When the opponents strategies go wrong to capitalize on such wrongs an intelligent captain Tom Latham cleverly used the opportunity to their advantage. The lackadaisical approach of skipper Rohit to the game, lack of application to the task of the Indian top order batting, not sticking to the basics in the guise of trying innovations by the think tank under the leadership of Gautam Gambhir are all causes for the team India's failure. Hopefully the team will learn from their mistakes before it is too late!! Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com





## FIRST COLUMN

### MERGE YOURSELF IN LIGHT OF LIGHTS

This Diwali, light a lamp of love, blast a chain of sorrow and shoot a rocket of prosperity and happiness



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

The biggest and the brightest of all the festivals celebrated across India as well as the whole world is about to arrive and fill our lives with joy and happiness. Yes! We all know that's none other than "Diwali" or as we say "Deepawali" in India. Such is the magic of this festival that throughout the 4-day celebrations, illuminates the whole nation with its brilliance, and dazzles all with its joy. Though each of the four days during Diwali is separated by a different tradition, what remains true and constant is the celebration of life, its enjoyment and goodness. We all know that as per the Hindu calendar, Diwali is celebrated on the darkest night of the month of Kartik. That is why it is also considered an occasion of victory of light over darkness or good over evil. Kartik month is the 8th lunar month of the Hindu calendar. This month is considered the holiest of all the months in the Hindu calendar. Kartik Snaan (Bath) is given a lot of importance by Hindus wherein it is customary for people to go to the holy rivers or oceans because it is a general belief that your sins or bad karmas are washed away or forgiven when you perform this ritual, but all these are only symbolic. However, Kartik means change or transformation from the old to the new. It is the last festival in the year that is celebrated as the conquest



of the virtues over the vices by 'bathing in the ocean of knowledge' i.e. 'Gyaan Ganga' to cleanse the soul of all the impurities accumulated in the dark ages. It is thus a unique process to change a man (Nar) from ordinary to an elevated perfect man or deity called "Narayan".

Going by history, the festival of Diwali can be traced back to ancient India, when it was probably an important harvest festival. However, various legends are pointing to the origin of Diwali or 'Deepawali.' Some believe it to be the celebration of the marriage of Shri Lakshmi with Lord Vishnu. Whereas in Bengal the festival is dedicated to the worship of Mother Kali, the goddess of strength. Lord Ganesha, the elephant-headed God, the symbol of auspiciousness and wisdom, is also worshipped in most Hindu homes today. In Jainism, Deepawali has an added significance to the great event of Lord Mahavira attaining the eternal bliss of nirvana.

Diwali also commemorates the return of Lord Rama along with Sita Ji and Lakshman Ji from his fourteen-year-long exile and vanquishing the demon-king Ravana. In joyous celebration of the return of their king, the people of Ayodhya, the Capital of Lord Rama, illuminated the kingdom with earthen diyas (oil lamps) and burst crackers.

Each day of Diwali has its tale, legend and myth to tell, but one should not forget the fact that behind each of these legends, myths and stories lies the significance of the victory of good over evil; and it is with each Deepawali and the lights that illuminate our homes and hearts, that this simple truth finds new reason and hope. So, this Diwali, merge yourself into the light of lights who is Supreme of all and enlighten yourself from within.

*(The writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist, views are personal)*

# The web of conspiracy theories and the US election



SANTHOSH MATHEW

Conspiracy theories have captivated society for centuries, spinning intriguing narratives that challenge our sense of truth—and the recent US elections are no exception



In every era, conspiracy theories have captivated the public imagination, creating a whirlwind of suspicions, accusations, and intrigue. Today, with the American presidential election in the rearview mirror, the air is thick with conspiracy theories, some rooted in historical patterns and others fueled by recent global events.

From ancient prophecies to modern speculations, these narratives show how deeply conspiratorial thinking is woven into society, even influencing one of the most powerful democracies in the world. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a wave of theories dominated headlines, each offering a different perspective on the virus's origin and spread. For example, when former U.S. President Donald Trump labelled COVID-19 the "Wuhan virus," he fanned the flames of speculation that the virus was the result of Chinese bio-engineering. Simultaneously, however, a counter-narrative gained traction, suggesting that the virus was an American creation, designed and disseminated as part of an alleged biological warfare program.

Even within the conspiracy community, viewpoints diverged: was COVID-19 a lab-born pathogen or a consequence of environmental manipulation? A particularly unique theory even claimed the virus spread through the electromagnetic signals of 5G towers, resulting in people burning down cell towers in the United Kingdom. The COVID-19 narrative was far from alone in raising eyebrows. Conspiracy theorists link current fears to past events—from the HIV/AIDS epidemic to natural disasters. Some hold that HIV was an engineered product of the U.S. military's biological weapons division, first tested on prisoners in the 1970s before it spread outside government control.

Others go back further in history, believing that HIV stemmed from scientific mutations, a theory allegedly supported by Russian virologists who argue that HIV was a modified form of the VISNA virus, created in a laboratory setting. Nobel laureate Wangari Maathai also claimed in 2004 that



ALTHOUGH LICHTMAN'S PREDICTIONS ARE BASED ON A WELL-FORMULATED SYSTEM, HIS TRACK RECORD AND THE NICKNAME HE'S ACQUIRED SEEM TO LEND CREDENCE TO THE IDEA THAT PROPHECY AND FORESIGHT HAVE A PLACE EVEN IN THE MOST RATIONAL DOMAINS

AIDS was no accident, attributing its origin to American laboratories.

Natural disasters, too, have not escaped the lens of conspiratorial imagination. In the wake of the catastrophic 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, rumours spread that U.S. military tests were to blame. The claim was that sophisticated nuclear weapons testing off the coast of Indonesia could manipulate the weather and disrupt seismic activity. Alongside such theories, another narrative has taken shape, labelled the "Thucydides Trap"—a concept rooted in the belief that rising powers, such as China, often seek to destabilize dominant powers, exemplified by the release of COVID-19 as an alleged bio-weapon against the United States. Conversely, some assert that COVID-19 was a means for the U.S. to undermine China, spurring a dramatic escalation of mutual suspicion. Even the 9/11 attacks are rich ground for conspiracy theories. There are over four million articles online dissecting and speculating on every aspect of the attack, including claims of prior U.S. knowledge and deliberate inaction. Such theories propose that the tragedy served as a pretext for increased American military involvement in the Middle East, bolstering the economic interests of defence industries.

In such an environment, it is hardly surprising that suspicion surrounds recent American presidential elections. Election season in the United States has always been a prime opportunity for conspiracy theories, with the latest election being no exception. In this context, Nostradamus, the French astrologer and reputed seer of the 16th century reappears in the collective imagination. Nostradamus is often cited as having "predicted" world events, from the rise of Hitler to the terror of 9/11. As American political dynamics shift, believers inter-

pret Nostradamus' cryptic prophecies to suit contemporary issues, citing his supposed foresight about Trump's ascension and even a second term. Such theories proliferate because they tap into pre-existing beliefs, adding layers of mystery to the already intricate political landscape. One particularly respected figure in the American election-prediction community is historian Allan Lichtman. Dubbed the "Election Nostradamus," Lichtman has accurately forecasted the outcomes of multiple presidential elections over the past few decades.

Although Lichtman's predictions are based on a well-formulated system, his track record and the nickname he's acquired seem to lend credence to the idea that prophecy and foresight have a place even in the most rational domains. Lichtman's projections of a Democratic victory fueled hope among Biden and Harris supporters, while some conspiracy theorists proposed that the "powers that be" were covertly steering the election outcome to align with Lichtman's track record. In the age of social media and instantaneous communication, conspiracy theories spread rapidly.

The adage, "A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes," aptly describes how quickly misinformation can take hold. The rise of the internet has only amplified this effect, granting conspiracy theories a global platform.

Notably, the Flat Earth Society has found new life online, continuing to challenge the scientifically accepted fact that the Earth is round. The society's followers persist in their belief, interpreting satellite imagery and NASA's findings as government propaganda. Similarly, speculation surrounds the historic 1969 moon landing. Despite NASA's documentation

and evidence, sceptics argue that the moon landing was an elaborate hoax staged to one-up the Soviet Union in the Cold War space race. Believers insist that the televised moonwalks were filmed on Earth, attributing the iconic image of Neil Armstrong to American propaganda efforts.

The moon landing controversy may be one of the most persistent conspiracy theories, as it continues to captivate audiences more than 50 years later. As much as conspiracy theories focus on the United States, they are not exclusive to any single nation. Still, America's global influence and extensive media presence make it especially susceptible to scrutiny. Government mistrust underpins many of these theories, exemplified by the Roman historian Tacitus, who posited that the actions of untrustworthy rulers breed public suspicion.

According to Tacitus, regimes that lose the faith of their citizens tend to fuel the fires of conspiracy, using public confusion as a tool to maintain control. In the current political climate, where truth is elusive and media narratives frequently conflict, conspiracy theories are likely to thrive. They emerge not only from a need to question authority but also from an inherent fascination with the unknown.

For every piece of verified information, there is a counter-theory that rejects it, and conspiracy theories transform historical and current events into captivating narratives for believers and sceptics alike.

As American democracy continues to face these claims, it's clear that conspiracy theories are not going away any time soon. Rather, they will evolve, adapting to each new event and generation with the same intensity that has fueled them for centuries.

*(The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)*

# Bootstrapped startups: The resilient path to sustainable growth

By starting small and reinvesting profits, bootstrapped startups prioritise sustainable growth and operational agility over rapid scaling

Entrepreneurship is a dream journey for many young minds full of innovative ideas and pioneering thoughts. And many times, they are left to fend for themselves. Before the world believes in their ideas, entrepreneurs have to believe in themselves and their ideas first. For their entrepreneurial ventures to see the light of the day, entrepreneurs, therefore, first turn towards themselves and become their investors. This idea is known as bootstrapping, which is the process of developing a business with limited resources, without the financial and managerial support of an investor, more particularly an angel investor. So, in this case, the entrepreneur starts his business with little or no money, all the while



HIMA BINDU KOTA

ploughing back the funds generated by customer-driven business into the operations to achieve growth. A bootstrapped startup is characterized by full control of the founder over the business without the pressures of outside investors.

This provides the founder with elbow room to be flexible and agile in decision-making. The challenge to sustain

the startup brings out creativity and resourcefulness in problem-solving. Combined with lean operations and focus on revenue generation, the founder manages to survive and thrive which leads to high founder satisfaction, self-reliance and long-term sustainable growth.

Although it is difficult to dampen the spirit of entrepreneurship, the statistics sure leave us disheartened. According to an article in Harvard Business Review by Prof. Tom Eisenmann, nearly 63 per cent of startups never end up with a positive return. By another metric, only 15 per cent of startups ever see through their first round of funding. So, in situations where the survival of startups is difficult, being bootstrapped

can make it even harder. While bootstrapping provides entrepreneurs with increased financial independence and control, there can be several disadvantages. Liquidity crunch is one of the major disadvantages of a bootstrapped enterprise. A steady flow of funds is essential for any operation and all the more important for a start-up.

A bootstrapped company has to generate enough profits to cover the daily operational expenses and more often than not, because of lack of financial cushion, it is difficult to withstand sudden economic crises, disruptions, and market downturns. Secondly, it is difficult for bootstrapped companies to attract and hire talented employees with limited budgets. Additionally, in such



situations, founders end up multi-tasking even though they may lack specialized skills in some of the key function areas of a business, like production, sales and marketing, new business development, and daily operations, which may affect long-term growth prospects. So, are bootstrapped companies less valuable than funded companies? This is a quintes-

sential question. Well, to answer this, let's try to see what is value. For starters, a company is valuable if, irrespective of its size, can develop a product or service and generate revenue.

By doing so, over some time, the revenue base starts helping the company to grow organically and lo behold, it manages to cross the 'valley of death'. So, a company that can grow with its revenues and survive and sustain on a long-term basis is far more valuable than a funded company that can show growth metrics only on the backing of funding received, which may be short-lived, if it is unable to generate revenue-backed growth quickly. Therefore, in a start-up world where 9 out of 10 startups fail, bootstrapped startups have a

greater chance of survival as they are 55 per cent more likely to establish positive cash flows within the first three years of operations and generate a sustainable revenue stream.

This makes their failure rate 47 per cent lower than VC-funded startups. What one cannot ignore is the fact the value of a bootstrapped startup also comes from the intangible qualities of the founder like determination, passion, grit, resourcefulness and agility. These qualities are the mainstay of any bootstrapped startup that navigates it through the uncertain world of entrepreneurship. They are like the secret ingredients for the success of a bootstrapped startup – a battle between the wit and creativity of a founder versus

the deep pockets of a VC. By focusing on customer acquisition and revenue generation, bootstrapped startups demonstrate their qualities of innovation, resourcefulness, flexibility and agility, in navigating the uncertain world of entrepreneurship. By keeping themselves lean and using cost-effective strategies, bootstrapped startups facilitate higher profit margins that in turn lead to long-term sustainable growth.

In a startup world that is fixated with high growth fancy ideas and flamboyant entrepreneurs, bootstrapped startups stand out as beacons of efficiency, proving that sometimes slow and steady truly does win the race.

*(The writer is a financial analyst; views are personal)*



# Israel passes laws to restrict work of UN agency that is lifeline for Gaza

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israeli lawmakers passed two laws on Monday that could threaten the work of the main UN agency providing aid to people in Gaza by barring it from operating on Israeli soil, severing ties with it and labelling it a terror organisation.

The laws, which do not immediately take effect, signal a new low for a long-troubled relationship between Israel and the UN. Israel's international allies said they were deeply worried about their potential impact on Palestinians as the Gaza war's humanitarian toll worsens.

Under the first law, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, or UNRWA, would be banned from conducting "any activity" or providing any service inside Israel. The second law would sever Israel's diplomatic ties with the agency.

The laws risk collapsing the already fragile process for distributing aid in Gaza at a moment when Israel is under increased US pressure to ramp up aid. UNRWA's chief called them "a dangerous precedent".

Israel has alleged that some UNRWA's thousands of staff members participated in the Hamas attacks last year that sparked the war in Gaza. It also has said hundreds of UNRWA staff have militant ties and that it has found Hamas military assets in or under the agency's facilities.

The agency fired nine employees after an investigation but denied it knowingly aids armed groups and said it acts quickly to purge any suspected militants from its ranks. Some of Israel's allegations prompted major international donors to cut funding to the agency, although some of it has been restored.

Israel has at times during the war raided or attacked UNRWA schools or other facilities, saying militants were operating there. UNRWA says more than 200 of its employees have been killed during the war. "The law that we passed now is not just another bill. It is a call for justice and a wake up call," said lawmaker Boaz Bismuth, who co-sponsored one of the bills. "UNRWA is not an aid agency for refugees. It is an aid

agency for Hamas." The head of UNRWA, Philippe Lazzarini, said the new laws were part of an "ongoing campaign to discredit UNRWA."

"These bills will only deepen the suffering of Palestinians, especially in Gaza," he said on the social platform X.

The first vote passed 92-10 and followed a fiery debate between supporters of the law and its opponents, mostly members of Arab parliamentary parties. The second law was approved 87-9.

An English language account on X for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel was ready to work with international partners to ensure it "continues to facilitate humanitarian aid to civilians in Gaza".

The post did not say how, and it was not clear how the flow of aid would be affected once these bills take effect.

Together, the laws would effectively sever ties with the UN agency, strip it of legal immunities and restrict its ability to support Palestinians in east Jerusalem and the West Bank. The legislation does not pro-

vide for alternative organizations to oversee its work.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said UNRWA would be prevented from doing UN General Assembly-mandated work if the laws are implemented. "There is no alternative to UNRWA," he said in a statement issued Monday night.

Guterres called on Israel "to act consistently with its obligations" under the UN Charter and international law, as well as the privileges and immunities of the United Nations. "National legislation cannot alter those obligations," Guterres stressed in a statement.

**International allies of Israel's have opposed the move:** The changes could be a serious blow to Palestinians in Gaza. More than 1.9 million Palestinians are displaced from their homes, and Gaza faces widespread shortages of food, water and medicine. International aid groups and a handful of Israel's Western allies, including the US, have voiced strong opposition.

US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller,

speaking to reporters in Washington before the votes, said the administration was "deeply concerned" by the legislation. "There's nobody that can replace them right now in the middle of the crisis," he said. UNRWA provides education, health care and other basic services to millions of Palestinian refugees across the region, including in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

The laws would go into effect 60 to 90 days after Israel's Foreign Ministry notifies the UN, according to the spokesperson of lawmaker Dan Ilouz, one of the co-sponsors of one of the laws.

**Death toll in Gaza surpasses 43,000 as Israeli raids continue:** The death toll from more than a year of fighting has passed 43,000, officials in Gaza reported on Monday.

The Palestinian Health Ministry's count does not distinguish between civilians and combatants but says more than half of the dead are women and children.

The rising death toll comes as Israel refocuses its offensive on Gaza's hard-hit north, includ-

ing on a hospital from where the military says militants were operating.

Israeli forces raided Kamal Adwan Hospital on Friday. An Israeli military official, speaking on Monday on condition of anonymity in keeping with regulations, said there was heavy fighting around the hospital, though not inside it, and that weapons were found inside the facility. The military said Monday the raid had ended. Israel has raided several hospitals in Gaza over the course of the yearlong war, saying Hamas and other militants use them for military purposes. Palestinian medical officials deny those allegations and accuse the military of recklessly endangering civilians.

The Israeli military said it detained 100 suspected Hamas militants in the latest raid. The Israeli official said medical staff were detained and searched because some of the militants had disguised themselves as medics.

The World Health Organisation accused Israel of detaining 44 male hospital staff. It was not immediately

clear why there was a discrepancy in the figures. Palestinian medical officials said the hospital, which was treating some 200 patients, was heavily damaged in the raid.

The Israeli military has called on Palestinians to evacuate northern Gaza, where it has been waging a large offensive for more than three weeks. The official said the operation in the northern Gaza city of Jabaliya would last "several more weeks".

The UN said earlier this month at least 400,000 people are in northern Gaza, an area that was an early target of Israel's retaliatory war. Hunger there is rampant as the amount of humanitarian aid reaching the north has plummeted over the past month.

The Israel-Hamas war began after militants from Hamas and other groups stormed into Israel, killing some 1,200 people — mostly civilians — and abducting 250 others. The war has roiled the Middle East, setting off fighting between Israel and Hezbollah as well as between Israel and Iran, archenemies

who had long kept their conflict a shadow war but are now engaging in open fighting.

**International mediators renew efforts for a Gaza cease-fire:** After collapsing in late summer, international mediators were trying to jump-start cease-fire efforts between Israel and Hamas. Israel said it would continue discussions on a halt in fighting after the head of the Mossad agency, David Barnea, returned from a meeting in Qatar with the head of the CIA, David Burns, and the Qatari prime minister.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi has suggested a two-day cease-fire in exchange for the release of four hostages. Israel appeared responsive to the idea.

One Israeli official said Israel was discussing the proposal both internally and with Egyptian officials. A second official said Netanyahu expressed enthusiasm for the proposal in a meeting with his Likud party on Monday.

Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to discuss internal deliberations.

# Satellite photos show Israeli strike hit Iran Revolutionary Guard missile base

AP ■ DUBAI

Israel's attack on Iran likely damaged a base run by the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard that builds ballistic missiles and launches rockets as part of its own space programme, satellite images analysed by The Associated Press on Tuesday showed.

The damage at the base in Shahroud raises new questions about Israel's attack early Saturday, particularly as it took place in an area previously unacknowledged by Tehran and involved the Guard, a powerful force within Iran's theocracy that so far has remained silent about any possible damage it suffered from the assault.

Iran only has identified Israeli attacks as taking place in Ilam,

Khuzestan and Tehran provinces — not in rural Semnan province where the base is located.

It also potentially further restrains the Guard's ability to manufacture the solid-fuel ballistic missiles it needs to stockpile as a deterrent against Israel. Tehran long has relied on that arsenal as it cannot purchase the advanced Western weapons that Israel and Tehran's Gulf Arab neighbours have armed themselves with over the years, particularly from the United States.

Satellite photos earlier analysed by the AP of two military bases near Tehran also targeted by Israel shows sites there Iran uses in its ballistic missile manufacturing have been destroyed, further squeezing its programme.

"We don't know if Iranian production has been crippled as some people are saying or just damaged," said Fabian Hinz, a missile expert and research fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies who studies Iran. "We've seen enough imagery to show there's an impact."

Iran's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment, nor did the Israeli military.

**Images show major building at Shahroud base destroyed:** High-resolution satellite images from Planet Labs PBC taken for and analysed by the AP showed the damage at the Guard's Shahroud Space Centre in Semnan, some 370 kilometres northeast of the Iranian capital, Tehran. Semnan also hosts

the Imam Khomeini Space Centre, which is used by Iran's civilian space programme.

The images showed a central, major building at the Shahroud Space Centre had been destroyed, the shadow of its still-standing frame seen in the image taken Tuesday morning.

Vehicles could be seen gathered around the site, likely from officials inspecting the damage, with more cars than normal parked at the site's main gate nearby.

Three small buildings just to the south of the main structure also appeared to be damaged. Iran has been constructing new buildings at the base in recent months. Another hangar to the northeast of the main building also appeared to have been damaged.

# Israeli strike in northern Gaza kills 60; Hezbollah announces new leader

AP ■ DEIR AL-BALAH (GAZA STRIP)

An Israeli strike on a five-story building where displaced Palestinians were sheltering in the northern Gaza Strip killed at least 60 people early Tuesday, more than half of them women and children, Gaza's Health Ministry said.

In a separate development, Lebanon's militant group Hezbollah said it has chosen Sheikh Naim Kassem to succeed longtime leader Hassan Nasrallah, who was killed in an Israeli airstrike last month. Hezbollah vowed to continue with Nasrallah's policies "until victory is achieved."

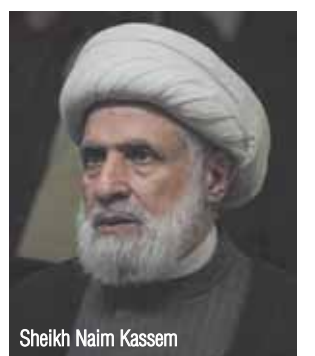
Israel also faced backlash from aid groups after its parliament passed legislation that could severely restrict the ability of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees to operate in the

Palestinian territories.

The agency, known as UNRWA, is the largest aid provider in Gaza. Israel has long accused it of militant ties, allegations denied by the agency.

A spokesperson for the UN children's agency said the decision "means that a new way has been found to kill children."

**Hezbollah's new leader has vowed to keep fighting Israel:** Hezbollah said in a statement that its decision-making Shura Council elected Kassem, who had been Nasrallah's deputy leader for over three decades, as the new secretary-general. Kassem, 71, a founding member of the militant group established following Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, had been serving as acting leader. He has given several televised speeches vowing that Hezbollah will fight on despite a string of set-



Sheikh Naim Kassem

backs. Hezbollah began firing rockets into Israel, drawing retaliation, after Hamas' surprise attack out of Gaza on October 7, 2023, triggered the war there. Iran, which backs both groups, has also directly traded fire with Israel, in April and then again this month.

The tensions with Hezbollah boiled over in September, as Israel unleashed a wave of heavy airstrikes and killed Nasrallah and most of his senior commanders. Israel launched a ground invasion into Lebanon at the start of October. Hezbollah fired dozens of rockets into northern Israel on Tuesday, killing at least one person in the northern city of Maalot-Tarshiha, authorities said.

**Strike in northern Gaza comes as Israel wages a major operation there:** Even as attention has shifted to Lebanon and Iran in recent weeks, Israel has continued to wage a large operation in northern Gaza and to carry out airstrikes across the territory.

Dr Marwan al-Hams, director of the field hospitals' department at the Gaza Health Ministry, announced the toll from Tuesday's strike in the northern town of Beit Lahiya at a news conference.

# Petition seeking ban on Awami League withdrawn

PTI ■ DHAKA

A writ petition filed in a high court in Bangladesh seeking a ban on ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League and several other parties was withdrawn on Tuesday.

Leaders of the anti-discrimination students' movement, which led to the ouster of Hasina's 15-year regime on August 5, on Monday in a petition in Dhaka High Court sought the court's directions to prevent the Awami League and 10 other parties from conducting political activities in the country.

Court officials and lawyers said three top leaders or coordinators of the movement — Sarjis Alam, Hasnat Abdullah and Hasibul Islam — decided not to proceed with the petition that also questioned the past three general elections in 2014, 2018 and 2024 which installed Hasina-led Awami League to power.

The elections were staged amid allegations of massive vote manipulation or boycott by the

main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) led by former prime minister Begum Khaleda Zia and several other parties. The movement leaders, however, preferred not to proceed with the second writ either that questioned the legitimacy of these three parliamentary elections. The two writs, listed by a two-member high court bench for hearing on Tuesday, were withdrawn as the proceedings began in the morning. The petitioners' lawyers informed the bench that their clients would not proceed with the writs.

Alongside Awami League, the writ petition was filed against Jatiya Party (Ershad), Jatiya Party (Manju), Ganatantri Party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh, Bangladesh Tarikat Federation, Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Communist Party of Bangladesh (Marxist-Leninist) (Barua), and Workers Party of Bangladesh.

In response to their inclusion in the petition, the LDP demand-

ed an apology from the petitioners.

The CPB said they might have been mentioned out of a misunderstanding, and the Jatiya Party (Ershad) said they would address the matter through legal means. The right-wing LDP and left-wing CPB were harsh critics of the Awami League regime and did not take part in the elections. The BNP, which has appeared as the major political force in Bangladesh politics following Hasina's ouster, however, said they opposed a ban on any political party for inclusiveness in elections. Meanwhile, the interim government on Monday evening said it had yet not decided upon banning any political party.

"The government only has banned Bangladesh Chhatra League (pro-Awami League student organisation). It did not decide at this point to ban any other political party," a spokesman from the Bangladesh interim government's media wing said in a briefing.

# Boat carrying migrants capsizes off Libyan coast

AP ■ CAIRO

A boat carrying 13 Egyptian migrants to Europe has capsized off Libya's coast, killing all on board except for one person, local authorities and a Libyan group said Tuesday. Al-Abreen, a group that provides humanitarian assistance to migrants in Libya, said on Facebook that the boat capsized 60 kilometers east of the city of Tobruk on Monday evening.

One migrant survived, according to the group, which said the bodies were recovered and brought to shore.

The Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration in Tobruk also confirmed the incident.

In recent years, the North African nation has become the dominant transit point for migrants fleeing war and poverty in Africa and the Middle East.

Last month, a migrant boat carrying 32 people capsized off the Libyan coast due to engine failure, leaving one person dead and 22 others missing, according to Libyan authorities.

# US President Biden hosts Diwali celebration at White House

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden on Monday hosted a Diwali celebration at the White House that was attended by more than 600 eminent Indian Americans, including Congressmen, officials, and corporate executives, from across the country.

"As President, I've been honoured to host the biggest Diwali receptions ever at the White House. To me, it means a great deal. As Senator, Vice President, and President; South Asian Americans have been key members of my staff. From Kamala to Dr Murthy to so many of you here today, I'm proud that I kept my commitment to have an administration that looks like America," Biden said in a standing-only packed East Room of the White House.

Vice President Kamala Harris and First Lady Dr Jill Biden could not attend the event as they are on the campaign trail. Biden's remarks were preceded

by Vice Admiral Vivek H. Murthy, US Surgeon General; Sunita Williams, Retired Navy Officer and NASA Astronaut who sent a recorded video message from the International Space Station and Shrusti Anula, Indian-American Youth Activist who introduced the president.

"In late November 2016, a dark cloud formed from hate and hostility toward immigrants, including South Asian Americans. We hear once again in 2024. It was then that Jill and I hosted the first Diwali reception and it was at the Vice President's residence. An Irish Catholic President, Vice President at the time, opened our home for holiday celebrations by Hindus, Buddhists, Jainists, Sikhs, and more. How America reminds us all of our power to be the light, all of us," he said.

Biden, who lit the formal diya in the Blue Room of the White House, said the South Asian

American community has enriched every part of American life. "That's the truth. That is among the fastest-growing, most engaged communities in the country you are now," he said.

"On this day in America, we think about that journey of light. Early in our nation's founding, A generation before diya, in the shadow of suspicion, now in a time Diwali is celebrated openly and proudly here in the White House. We also know today we face an inflection point," he said.

One of those rare moments that only come once every several generations, where the decisions we make today will determine the future to come for decades, literally. Every generation has been called to move us forward, to be the nation we say we are. But only once in every few generations, we are reminded not to take the idea of America for granted, because it's never guaranteed. That moment is now,

Biden said. "American democracy has never been easy. In a country as diverse as ours, we debate, we dissent as we forge a path forward through compromise and consensus. But the key is we never lose sight of how we got here and why. For me, 50 years of public service comes with the clarity of confidence in America. We're a nation with a heart, a soul that draws from old and new," he said.

"In America, everything runs deep, especially the courage to serve and protect, to heal and to bear witness, to immigrate, to dare to dream. With my presidency, I've tried to channel that American spirit by bringing to bear all my experiences and wisdom gained from it, and to get us through one of the most difficult periods in our nation's recent history, and to be a bridge between generations, like in memory and imagination," Biden said.

# After India, Brazil will also not join China's BRI

PTI ■ BEIJING

In a major setback to China's BRI, Brazil has decided against joining Beijing's multi-billion-dollar initiative becoming the second country after India in the BRICS bloc not to endorse the mega project.

Brazil, headed by President Lula da Silva, will not join the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and instead seek alternative ways to collaborate with Chinese investors, Celso Amorim, special presidential adviser for international affairs, said on Monday.

Brazil wants to "take the relationship with China to a new level, without having to sign an accession contract," he told Brazilian newspaper O Globo. "We are not entering into a treaty," Amorim said, explaining that Brazil does not want to take Chinese infrastructure and trade projects as "an insurance policy".

According to Amorim, the aim is to use some of the Belt and Road framework to find "synergy" between Brazilian infrastructure projects and the investment funds associated with the initiative, without necessarily formally joining the group, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post quoted him as saying.

The Chinese "call it the belt [and road] ... and they can give whatever names they want, but what matters is that there are projects that Brazil has defined as a priority and that may or may not be accepted [by Beijing]," Amorim said.

The decision contradicts China's plans to make Brazil's joining of the initiative a centrepiece of Chinese President Xi Jinping's state visit to Brasilia on November 20, the Post reported.

Officials from Brazil's economy and foreign affairs ministries recently voiced opposition to

the idea, it said.

The prevailing opinion in Brazil was that joining China's flagship infrastructure project would not only fail to bring any tangible benefits for Brazil in the short term but could also make relations with a potential Trump administration more difficult. Last week, Amorim and the president's chief of staff Rui Costa travelled to Beijing to discuss the initiative.

According to sources, they returned "unconvinced and unimpressed" by China's offers, the Post reported.

Lula did not attend this month's BRICS summit at Kazan due to an injury and his close associate and former Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff currently heads the Shanghai-based BRICS New Development Bank (NDB). BRICS originally consisted of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia,

and the United Arab Emirates have been admitted as new members. Brazil will be the second member of the BRICS after India not to endorse the BRI. India was the first country to voice reservations and stood steadfast in its opposition to BRI, a pet project of Chinese President Xi Jinping to further the global influence of China with investments to build infrastructure projects.

India has protested against China for building the USD 60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), stated to be the flagship project of the BRI through the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK) in violation of its sovereignty.

India is also vocal about its criticism of BRI projects stating they should be based on universally recognised international norms, good governance, and the rule of law and follow principles of openness, trans-

parency and financial sustainability.

China subsequently faced criticism that the BRI projects in smaller countries like Sri Lanka, especially for its take-over of the Hambantota for a 99-year lease as a debt swap turned out to be debt traps resulting in a deep financial crisis in both smaller countries.

Indian diplomats here point out that besides staying away from three annual high-profile meetings of the BRI in Beijing in the past few years, India continued to voice its opposition to it both in the BRICS and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, (SCO).

US Trade Representative Katherine Tai recently urged Brazil to view the proposal to join BRI through an "objective lens" and "risk management".

The Chinese embassy in Brasilia called her remarks "irresponsible" and "disrespectful". China's state-run Global

Times in an editorial on Monday termed Tai's comments against BRI as "steeped in the spectre of 'Monroe Doctrine'."

"Brazil does not need others to dictate who to cooperate with or what kind of partnerships to conduct, and the normal economic and trade cooperation between China and Latin American countries should not be subject to scrutiny from third countries," it said.

"Currently, the US is attempting to build a 'small yard, high fence' against China in Brazil and other Latin American countries," it said.

"The cooperation between China and Brazil not only aligns with the interests of both countries but also meets the need for the Global South to build a more just and equitable international economic order. This trend is something that Washington cannot stop," it said.

# Germany recalls envoy from Iran

AP ■ BERLIN

Germany protested to Iran Tuesday over the execution of Iranian German prisoner Jamshid Sharmahd, who lived in the US and was kidnapped in Dubai in 2020 by Iranian security forces, and recalled its ambassador to Berlin for consultations.

The Foreign Ministry wrote on the social network X that Iran's charge d'affaires in Berlin was summoned to hear "our sharp protest" against Tehran's action and added that it reserves the right to take "further measures". It didn't elaborate.

At the same time, German Ambassador Markus Potzel "protested in the strongest terms against the murder of Jamshid Sharmahd" to the Iranian foreign minister, it

said. German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock then recalled him to Berlin for consultations.

Sharmahd, 69, was put to death in Iran on Monday on terrorism charges, the country's judiciary said. That followed a 2023 trial that Germany, the US and international rights groups dismissed as a sham.

He was one of several Iranian dissidents abroad in recent years either tricked or kidnapped back to Iran as Tehran began lashing out after the collapse of its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers including Germany. Iran accused Sharmahd, who lived in Glendora, California, of planning a 2008 attack on a mosque that killed 14 people — including five women and a child.







# Looking forward to advancing EU-India FTA talks: Pedro Sánchez

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Spanish President Pedro Sánchez on Tuesday said he looks forward to advancing EU-India FTA negotiations, highlighting the "enormous" potential for a stronger relationship between India and the 27-nation European Union bloc, including Spain. The European Union (EU)-India proposed a free trade agreement (FTA) aimed at further boosting bilateral trade and investments between the two regions. The two sides are negotiating FTA, investment protection treaty and agreement on geographical indications (GIs). "The potential for a stronger relationship between India and the European Union (including Spain) is enormous. Spain is one of the largest economies in the world and has invested USD 4.2 billion in India... We look forward to advancing negotiations on a European Union-India free trade agreement. This will help our markets grow in size and



diversity," Sánchez observed while addressing the CII Spain India Business Summit in Mumbai, a statement issued by the industry body said. This is Spanish President Sánchez's first visit to India. "We have a lot to offer to India with our experience in solar and wind power. Our expertise can help India reach its goal of 500 gigawatts of renewable energy by 2030. We are committed to partnering with India to boost its energy security and green transition. By combining Spanish innovation with India's potential, we can make a big impact on the global economy and the environment," President Sánchez said. He expressed willingness on the part of Spanish engineering firms in terms of sharing their expertise in creating efficient and sustainable transport systems. During the summit, Nitin Gadkari, Minister of Road

# Renault Nissan Automotive's Tamil Nadu plant produces over 45 lakh units

**PTI ■ CHENNAI**  
The manufacturing facility of automaker Renault Nissan Automotive India Pvt Ltd in Tamil Nadu has reached a milestone of producing over 45 lakh powertrain units since commencing operation in 2010, the company said. The 600 acre facility at Oragadam near here, caters to domestic and overseas market requirements for Renault and Nissan. Since the start of production, the factory produces Renault and Nissan brand of cars with over 2.75 million cars being produced till date, while the plant has produced seven different type of engines and three varieties of gearboxes. The milestone of producing over 4.5 million powertrain units at the factory includes 2.83 million engines and 1.67 million gearboxes, the company said in a statement on Tuesday.



In 2016, powertrain production reached one million milestone and has also produced more than 1.60 lakh units of "electric vehicle reducer components" for exports. "The production of 4.5 million powertrain units is a very important milestone for RNAIPL. In addition to powering the cars produced at our Chennai plant, we have also exported powertrain units and components to other countries around the world." Renault Nissan Automotive India Pvt Ltd managing director Keerthi Prakash said. Looking to the future, as part of the USD 600 million investment announced by the Renault Nissan alliance, we are readying our infrastructure to produce the engines and gearboxes for our new models," he added. The facility also produces various engine parts, such as cylinder head, cylinder block at the casting shop, machining them to perfect dimensions at the machining shop and assembling them at the Assembly shop. The plant has the capacity to produce engines with ranges from 800 cc to 1500 cc. It also houses facilities required for manufacturing gearboxes including gear and shaft machining, clutch house machining and gear heat treatment, the statement added.

# No shortage of crude oil in world: Hardeep Singh Puri

**PTI ■ CHANDIGARH**  
Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Tuesday said there is no shortage of crude oil in the world and enough refining capacity in the country to meet the domestic requirements. Referring to geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, the minister said it was his personal assessment that things will calm down, noting that it is in everybody's interest not to allow exaggeration to take place because everyone suffers. "There is no shortage of crude oil in the world," said Puri while replying to a question on the sidelines of an event regarding 'Rozgar Mela' here. "Prior to all these developments, the total



amount of crude, which was produced in the world, was close to 105 million barrels a day. OPEC+, a group of producing countries, voluntarily cut about 5 million barrels (a day). "If you talk to them, they will say they do not deal with prices but if you limit the quantity which comes into the market, then you are obviously affecting prices. It

refiners' margin and dealers' margin. "And in all that we are still amongst the lowest prices of petrol and diesel in the world. Why? Because on two occasions the Prime Minister in November 2021 and May 2022, we reduced the central excise duty," he said. Further, he said, "Today there is no shortage of oil and even today after all these geopolitical tensions, Iran, Israel, etc, prices of oil should be around 72-73 dollars a barrel. The market is factoring these things in." He added that there is also no shortage of refining capacity in India. "We have about 270 million metric tonnes per annum and are already raising it to 310. "There is enough crude available in the market, there is enough refining capacity and we have a very good distributors network. We have a very good arrangement with them. So there is no apprehension there," the minister said. "If you are asking me a question that what will happen in the Middle East, three months from now and six months from now. It is my personal assessment that things will calm down. It is in everybody's interest not to allow exaggeration to take place because everyone suffers." If oil supplies get disrupted, freight rate goes up, insurance rate goes up and I am hoping that it does not happen," he added. Puri said new oil is coming into the market. "Brazil is getting another 4,00,000 barrels a day. The US is likely to bring more oil to the market," he said.

# Government asks manufacturers to cut price of three anti-cancer drugs

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
The government has asked the companies to reduce prices of three anti-cancer drugs to pass on the benefit of customs duty exemption and GST reduction to the consumers. In line with the government's commitment to ensure the availability of drugs at affordable prices, the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has issued an office memorandum directing the concerned manufacturers to reduce the MRP on three anti-cancer drugs, Trastuzumab, Osimertinib and Durvalumab. This is in pursuance to the announcement made in the Union Budget for the year



2024-25 exempting these three anti-cancer medicines from customs duty, the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers said in a statement. The Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, issued a notification dated July 23, this year reducing the customs duty to nil on the three drugs. "Accordingly, there should be a reduction in MRP of these drugs in the market and benefits of reduced taxes and

duties should be passed on to the consumers," the ministry said. Hence, NPPA has directed all the manufacturers of above-mentioned drugs to reduce their MRP, it added. The manufacturers are required to issue a price list or supplementary price list to the dealers, state drugs controllers and the government indicating changes and to submit information regarding price changes to NPPA, the ministry said. While presenting the Union Budget for 2024-25 in the Lok Sabha, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed to cut customs duties on Trastuzumab, Osimertinib and Durvalumab from 10 per cent to nil.

# IRF seeks reduction of GST on helmets to zero per cent

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Welcoming the government's campaign against the use of substandard helmets, the International Road Federation (IRF) on Tuesday demanded reduction of GST on the protective gear to 0 per cent from the present 18 per cent. To enhance road safety and protect consumers from substandard helmets, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs (MCA) has written to district collectors (DCs) and district magistrates (DMs) to launch a



nationwide campaign targeting manufacturers and retailers who sell non-compliant helmets for two-wheeler riders. "IRF welcomes the campaign against substandard helmets but also demands reduction of GST on helmets to zero per cent from the present 18 per cent as India accounts for

about 11 per cent of road accident deaths worldwide," IRF President Emeritus K K Kapila said in a statement. Kapila added that helmet usage in India has been found to be low and it has been noticed that most two-wheeler riders fall in the economically weaker and lower income groups and prefer to purchase helmets that are cheaper and inferior in quality. Currently, the applicable rate of GST on helmets -- a life-saving protective gear -- is 18 per cent.

# Tata Power, IndusInd Bank partner to provide finance for solar projects

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Tata Power Renewable Energy Ltd has partnered with IndusInd Bank to offer financing options to Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) for solar installations. This alliance will provide MSEs with collateral-free solar financing, by offering loans ranging from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 2 crore, Tata Power Renewable Energy said in a statement on Tuesday. These loans, contingent on the bank's credit approval, require a 20 per cent margin and come with competitive interest rates, offering terms of up to 7 years, the company said. Deepesh Nanda, CEO & MD,



Tata Power Renewable Energy said, "Through a partnership with IndusInd Bank, we are facilitating easy financing opportunities for MSEs (Micro and Small Enterprises) to adopt solar energy, which will not only help them reduce operational costs but also actively contribute to the green energy transition."

# Ultra-luxury real estate market gains momentum

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**  
The ultra-luxury real estate segment in Delhi-NCR has been experiencing remarkable growth, driven by rising demand from affluent buyers seeking exclusive, high-end properties in prime locations. With areas like Golf Course Road, South Delhi, and Noida Expressway emerging as preferred destinations, developers are increasingly focusing on projects that offer premium amenities, innovative architecture, and unparalleled privacy. KREEVA, the luxury real estate arm of Kanodia Group,

has announced an ambitious expansion plan aimed at transforming the Delhi-NCR real estate landscape. Over the next 12-18 months, KREEVA will launch three ultra-luxury projects in prime NCR locations, aiming to generate an estimated revenue of INR 4000-6000 crore. The projects, featuring high-rise developments with state-of-the-art amenities, cater to affluent buyers and set new standards for luxury living. The five-year expansion strategy includes acquiring prime land across Golf Course Road, Southern Peripheral Road, South Delhi, and the

Noida Expressway. Targeting high-end clientele, KREEVA plans to launch at least one flagship project each year, with a commitment to innovation, exclusivity, and sustainability. Dr. Gautam Kanodia, Founder of KREEVA and Kanodia Group, stated, "We see immense potential in the evolving luxury market. Our projects will redefine luxury living through design excellence and sustainable practices." KREEVA CEO Mayank Jain added, "Our goal is to deliver projects that exceed market expectations, reinforcing KREEVA's position in the segment."

# Significant growth opportunity for renewable energy sector in India

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
There is significant growth opportunity for renewable energy sector in India, as the country's growing energy demand along with rapid industrialization needs all resources of energy, including solar and wind, according to an international sustainable development agency in Vienna. The Indian government has shown both a deep as well as a continued commitment to renewable energy, said Kanika Chawla, Director and Chief of Staff at 'Sustainable Energy For All' (SEforALL). Speaking to PTI on the sidelines of Singapore International Energy Week held in October 21-25, Chawla said there is more manufacturing (renewable energy) happening within India which also improves security and reduces import dependence. "India is using policies like performance-linked incentives for manufacturing. All this is



very laudable and brings energy economic prosperity to the people," she noted. Chawla also acknowledged that clean energy solutions are quite job intensive as every kWh of RE generates three times as many jobs compared to thermal. India is also exploring geothermal options in Himachal Pradesh, Kashmir and Ladakh, she said, adding that the offshore exploration underway for wind energy, and the large-scale options are available in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu. She noted that India remains

a very price sensitive market and as such calls for reducing the cost of renewable energy units. Solar prices have been reduced significantly over the last decade, making it the cheapest renewable produced compared to anywhere in the world. Given the country's appetite for electricity, every kind of fuel is needed. And for that reason, wind has the scope to be a good mix in the national energy basket, highlighted Chawla. However, India will have to learn from the global subsea

projects and technologies for such transmission methods. She noted priorities set by the Green Hydrogen Mission and efforts that are underway, such as partnerships with international companies and technological transfer arrangements. India is also working on nuclear energy and has nuclear plants for power. But the challenge here is the long-lead time taken to build and critical-commissioning of a nuclear plant with safety and security concerns. Comparatively, solar projects

have a record of being implemented within 18-24 months. Presenting the latest update on power sector at the Singapore conference, Harish Dudani, member Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, said "In just a short span, from FY 2015-16 to FY 2023-24, there has been an expansion in solar and wind power from 40 GW to 143 GW. "This tremendous growth highlights India's capability to scale up renewable capacity at an unprecedented pace, positioning the country as one of the global leaders in energy transition," she said. India has taken a pledge to achieve about 50 per cent cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030 at COP 26 Glasgow. For Green Transition, India has set an ambitious target of 500 GW of variable renewable energy capacity by 2030. They announced a Net Zero target year of 2070.

# I-T department notifies range for transfer pricing cases

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
The income tax department has notified the tolerance range for variation between arm's length price and transfer pricing for international and specified domestic transactions for Assessment Year 2024-25. The range has been retained at the same level as last year's -- one per cent for "wholesale trading" and three per cent for all other taxpayers, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said. The term 'wholesale trading' will be defined as an international transaction or specified domestic transaction of trading in goods subject to certain conditions. "The notification of tolerance range shall provide certainty to taxpayers and reduce the risk perception associated with the pricing of a transaction in transfer pricing," the CBDT said in a statement.

# INBRIEF

**POWERGRID EMBARKS VIGILANCE AWARENESS WEEK**  
**GURUGRAM:** Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), a Maharatna PSU under Ministry of Power, Government of India, kickstarted Vigilance Awareness Week (VAW) 2024 through a walkathon led by Shri R. K. Tyagi, CMD

**D-ZONE YOUTH FESTIVAL FROM OCTOBER 29**  
**AMRITSAR:** The D-Zone (Kapurthala, Nawanshar) District Colleges Youth Festival of Guru Nanak Dev University will be held from October 29 to 30, 2024. Prof. Preet Mohinder Singh Bedi, Dean Student's Welfare said that a 500 student-artists from various colleges will participate in 36 items of this festival.

**CELESTIAL CARNIVAL ORGANIZED AT GNDU**  
**AMRITSAR:** The long-awaited Celestial Carnival, organized by the Department of Social Sciences of Guru Nanak Dev University at Asia House. The atmosphere was electric with the enthusiasm of both students and faculty, their energies reverberating through the venue and heralding the festive season.



# SPANIARDS RODRI, BONMATÍ WIN BALLON D'OR AWARD

AP ■ PARIS

Spanish midfielders Rodri and Aitana Bonmatí won the men's and women's Ballon d'Or award for the world's best soccer player. The 28-year-old Rodri on Monday won the prestigious award for the first time after helping Manchester City win the Premier League and being a key player in Spain's European Championship triumph. He succeeded eight-time winner Lionel Messi of Argentina. Rodri put his hands over his eyes when his name was read out by former winner George Weah. "Incredible night for me," said Rodri, who is out for the season after injuring his ACL last month and arrived on crutches to the ceremony. "One of my key things is I always try to improve every game." The 26-year-old Bonmatí retained her award after helping Barcelona win the Spanish league, the Spanish

cup and the Champions League. Bonmatí joined Barca teammate Alexia Putellas in winning two titles since the women's trophy was first awarded in 2018. She beat her teammates Caroline Graham Hansen of Norway and Salma Paralluelo of Spain as Barcelona completed a 1-2-3. "It's a pleasure to be here again," said Bonmatí, who received the award from Oscar winner Natalie Portman. "Thanks to my teammates and the clubs who make me a better football player every year." Vinicius Júnior was among the four men's finalists with his Real Madrid teammates Jude Bellingham and Dani Carvajal. But no one from Madrid attended the gala in central Paris, even though Carlo Ancelotti won the coach of the year award. Vinicius had been seen as one of the favourites for the award until making the decision not to travel to Paris for the ceremony. The decision was made by Madrid, according to

a person who works with Vinicius and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak about the player's whereabouts publicly. Vinicius finished second in the voting, with Bellingham third. Neither Messi nor Cristiano Ronaldo - winners of the prestigious individual award a combined 13 times - were in the running for this year's prize - the first time that's happened since 2003. While Rodri is not a flamboyant player or a prolific scorer like Messi and Ronaldo, he had a huge influence on City's team with his ability to protect the defense and distribute passes cleanly from the back. "I try to be a leader and try to improve every day from the best," Rodri said. City looked unbeatable at times with him in the side, while his excellent technical ability enabled him to slot smoothly into the quick-passing style made so effective

## BEST MEN'S AND WOMEN'S PLAYERS IN WORLD SOCCER



by Spain at Euro 2024. Bonmatí scored 19 goals for the second straight season for Barca and this year has netted five in five games for Spain, taking her international tally to 26. The Ballon d'Or was created by France Football magazine and has been awarded since 1956 for the men, and since 2018 for the women. It is voted for by journalists from the top 100 countries in the FIFA rankings. Each journalist, one per country, selects 10 players in ranked order, with points attributed to each position. The winner is the player who receives the most points. Unlike FIFA's awards for the best players each year, fans aren't part of the voting system. **YAMAHA'S TROPHY AND OTHER AWARDS:** On a good night for Spain and Barca players, teen prodigy Lamine Yamal - the youngest-ever scorer at a European Championship - won the Kopa award for best Under-21 player

and Barca won the best women's team award. Real Madrid was voted the best men's team. Former PSG forward Kylian Mbappé and Bayern Munich striker Harry Kane shared the Gerd Mueller award for most club and country goals last season with 52. Mbappé joined Madrid during the off-season. Argentina's penalty-saving specialist Emiliano Martínez retained the Lev Yashin award for best goalkeeper. Ancelotti and Olympic-winning coach Emma Hayes won the Johan Cruyff award for best men's and women's coach. Spain forward Jenni Hermoso, who has fought sexism in Spanish soccer after she was kissed on the lips at last year's Women's World Cup final by former federation president Luis Rubiales, collected the Socrates award for humanitarian work. A special award was given by France Football to the wife and son of late Germany great Franz Beckenbauer.



## Disappointed to miss out on final, but happy to win bronze: Jr hockey team skipper

Indian junior men's hockey team captain Amir Ali admitted that they were disappointed after failing to qualify for the final of the Sultan of Johor Cup but said a bronze medal was much better than returning home empty-handed. India beat New Zealand in a tense shoot-out in the third-fourth place classification match to clinch the bronze medal in the junior tournament at Johor Bahru, Malaysia last Saturday. "We were very disappointed after missing out on the final due to goal difference. But as a team, we decided, there was no point looking back at what we could have done better. We decided to focus on the bronze-medal match and told ourselves that we can't go back home empty handed," Ali said after returning here. India remained on top of the points table throughout the tournament with strong performances against Japan (4-2), Great Britain (6-4), Malaysia (4-2), and New Zealand (3-3). But the 0-4 loss against eventual winners Australia cost them dearly as they missed out on a spot in the final to Great Britain by one-goal difference. It was the legendary goalkeeper PR Sreejesh's first assignment as coach of the Indian junior men's team. "At least 12 players in the team were playing a big tournament for the first time. They had earlier played the Test series but they were new to a tournament setup. Sree bhai

(Sreejesh) is the best mentor we could have had," Ali said. "He constantly spoke to us about enjoying the matches and we played without taking any pressure. This was largely why we bounced back even after conceding goals and ended up winning those matches too," said the member of the Indian team that won the Sultan of Johor Cup in 2022. "He would talk to us about going step by step in the match and even during half-time breaks, when we would be behind in scoreline, he would tell us how we can go about without being under pressure. It was only that match against Australia where we lost by a huge goal margin that cost us dearly." Back to business at SAI, Bengaluru, the Indian junior team has now set its focus on winning the Junior Asia Cup title, a qualifying tournament for next year's FIH Junior World Cup. The Junior Asia Cup begins on November 26 in Muscat, Oman. "We are back in the camp and have begun our preparations for the Junior Asia Cup. The next few months are crucial for us as we prepare for the Junior World Cup on home soil," Ali said. "Being in the same campus as the senior team helps us a lot. Even for me personally, the experience I gained playing with the senior team has helped in guiding the newcomers in the junior side. I have learnt a lot from Harmanpreet Singh and Manpreet," he said.

## Bopanna-Ebden pair clinches spot in ATP Finals



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Premier doubles player Rohan Bopanna and his Australian partner Matthew Ebden have clinched a spot in the prestigious season-ending ATP Finals, marking the Indian's fourth appearance in the tournament. The Indo-Aussie duo secured their place

after Nathaniel Lammons and Jackson Withrow were eliminated at the Rolex Paris Masters, finalising the 2024 field. Joining Bopanna and Ebden in Turin's elite line-up will be Wesley Koolhof/Nikola Pietrangeli, Kevin Krawietz/Tim Puetz, Harri Heliövaara/ Henry Patten, Marcelo Arevalo/Mate Pavić, Marcel Granollers/Horacio Zeballos, Simone

Bollelli/Andrea Vavassori, and Max Purcell/Jordan Thompson. The ATP Finals, set for November 10-17 at the Inalpi Arena, feature only the top eight doubles teams globally. Bopanna and Ebden launched their season with a bang, winning the Australian Open as the Indian became the oldest man at 43 years, 331 days to become a world No 1. Bopanna and Ebden later added a Miami Open title to their resume. They also reached the final in Adelaide and the semi-finals at Roland Garros. This marks their second consecutive year qualifying for the ATP Finals; in 2023, they reached the semi-finals in Turin before being defeated by Granollers and Zeballos. For Bopanna, this event holds special significance as he eyes his maiden ATP Finals title. Previously, he finished as the finalist in 2012 with Mahesh Bhupathi and again in 2015 alongside Florin Mergea. Bopanna's ATP Finals journey began in 2011 with Aisam-Ul-Haq Qureshi.



## Mohun Bagan face resurgent Hyderabad FC in ISL

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Mohun Bagan Super Giant would be wary of a resurgent Hyderabad FC when the two sides face each other in their Indian Super League here on Wednesday. Hyderabad FC enter the match on the back of a resounding 4-0 win over Mohammedan Sporting in Kolkata that ended their seven-match winless streak. With that set aside, the team will now be hoping to get back-to-back three points under their belt, having last achieved this feat in a run of five matches from December 2022 to February 2023. Sustained success has been a concerning cause for the team, but recent signs have indicated that they have overcome those troubles to really come on their own and perform at par with their potential. Hyderabad FC put on a marvellous goal-scoring show against Mohammedan Sporting, converting four of their 11 attempted shots into goals. The Mariners, on the other hand, have been overcoming Hyderabad FC consistently in the recent past, losing only once in their previous seven matches against the side. The defending ISL champions have won four times and drawn twice in the period, keeping a clean sheet in six encounters. The Mariners beat Hyderabad FC in both their fixtures last season. However, a revived home team setup might present a tougher challenge to the Kolkata-based team. Mohun Bagan Super Giant have netted six times from set-pieces in the current campaign - the highest amongst all teams. Three of these goals

have come from corners, showing that the Hyderabad FC backline will have to be extra cautious in their defensive play from such situations. The Mariners' skill in creating effective attacks from open plays and set-pieces shows their unique strength when playing cohesively. The two sides have played 12 games in the ISL, with Hyderabad FC winning twice. Mohun Bagan have been triumphant on five occasions, whereas five games have resulted in a draw. Hyderabad FC head coach Thangboi Singto has praised his players for following his strategies to perfection. He has appreciated individuals for understanding their roles well and hopes that the trend continues in the coming games too. "During the game against Mohammedan SC, I had told the team that what we did in the first 20-25 minutes against Jamshepur FC is what we should take forward. They did that very well," Singto said. "Individual roles have been understood, from the forward line to the midfield. One part is understanding and the other is implementing it, and they did the latter very well." Mohun Bagan head coach Jose Molina highlighted a key area that he wants his team to improve upon. He wants them to defend collectively. "We will improve our defence when we will improve our attack. And it's not only about defending players and attacking players but for me, it's the whole team working together. 11 players defending and attacking together and that is what we have been watching the last (few) matches," Molina said.

## Tsitsipas overcomes stomach problem to win Paris opener

AP ■ PARIS

Stefanos Tsitsipas overcame San upset stomach to beat Roberto Carballes Baena 4-6 6-3 6-3 in the first round of the Paris Masters and stay in contention for a spot at the season-ending ATP finals. Tsitsipas has reached the Paris semifinals in the last two years and needs another deep run to have a chance of qualifying for the ATP finals tournament for the top eight players in Turin next month. But he said his stomach problem created a "second battle" in addition to his opponent on Monday. "I couldn't even pump myself up at the beginning of the match, because when something is bothering you that much, it takes your entire concentration and focus," Tsitsipas said. American Tommy Paul's hopes of qualifying for Turin ended with a 6-3 7-5 loss to French veteran Adrian Mannarino. Earlier, local favourite Hugo Humbert needed more than two hours to beat the 35th-ranked Brandon Nakashima 6-3 4-6 6-4. Humbert, who saved two break points in the decider, extended his unbeaten record against Nakashima to 3-0. He will next take on another American player, Marcos Giron, who defeated Shang



Juncheng 7-6(6) 7-6(6). Dutchman Tallon Griekspoor also advanced with a 6-3 6-4 win over Luciano Darderi - setting up a second-round meeting with third-seeded Alexander Zverev - and Tomas Martin Etcheverry of Argentina beat Zhang Zhizhen 6-3 7-6(6). Etcheverry will next face Grigor Dimitrov. Among those progressing Monday were also Francisco Cerundolo of Argentina, Arthur Rinderknech of France and Australian Jordan Thompson. Defending champion Novak Djokovic is skipping the tournament this year. Jannik Sinner, who is guaranteed to finish the year at the No. 1 spot in the ATP rankings, is the top-seeded player in Paris. Sinner, Carlos Alcaraz, Zverev and Daniil Medvedev have already secured their spot at the ATP finals from November 10-17.



## Top-ranked Jannik Sinner pulls out of Paris Masters citing "a virus"

AP ■ PARIS

Top-seeded Jannik Sinner has pulled out of the Paris Masters, citing a virus. The Italian player, who is guaranteed to finish the year as No. 1, said in a message relayed by organizers that he is unable to play this week. "I came very early here to prepare then I fell sick, I'm having a virus at the moment, which is going to pass the next two-three days, so body-wise I'm not ready to compete," Sinner said. Sinner is the second high-profile player to pull out of the final Masters 1000 event of the year following seven-time champion Novak Djokovic. Sinner earlier this month beat Djokovic in straight sets to win the Shanghai Masters, giving the Italian his tour-leading seventh title of the season. Sinner became the first man to win more than six titles in a season since Andy Murray won nine in 2016. Sinner's victory came after he lost the final of the China Open in Beijing to Carlos Alcaraz and amid an ongoing doping case.

# The statistics that show how badly Manchester United struggled under Erik ten Hag

AP ■ MANCHESTER (ENGLAND)

Manchester United, the record 20-time English champion, is searching for a sixth permanent manager since Alex Ferguson's retirement in 2013 following the firing of Erik ten Hag. Here are the statistics that show how low things got at United under Ten Hag - and what his successor will need to improve on: **WORST START:** The break for international matches this month offered a chance to assess each Premier League team's start to the season, and it didn't make good reading for United. After seven games, United had collected eight points - its fewest in the Premier League era (since 1992) by that stage of a season and its lowest tally since the team had

seven points from seven games in the 1989-90 season. Ten Hag's team was in 14th place in the 20-team top division at that point. With a win and a loss since then, United remains in 14th - already 12 points off first-place Manchester City. **WORST FINISH:** Last season, Ten Hag led United to its worst finish - eighth place - in the Premier League era. United had to go back to that 1989-90 season for a lower finish, and that was 13th place under Alex Ferguson in the year he reportedly came close to losing his job. **EUROPEAN FAILURE:** It didn't get any better in Europe for Ten Hag. United finished in last place in its Champions League group last season even though it contained outsiders like FC Copenhagen and Galatasaray. United conceded 15 goals in that

group, the most goals it has ever conceded in a single Champions League group stage. It was also a record for an English club. This season, United has drawn each of its three games in the revamped Europa League, against FC Twente, Porto and Fenerbahce - leaving the team in 21st place in the 36-team league, sandwiched between Viktoria Plzen and Elfsborg. **WHERE ARE THE GOALS?:** "Attack, attack, attack" is the chant that has often been heard swirling around Old Trafford down the years, but goals were hard to come by under Ten Hag. With eight goals from its opening nine games, United is currently the third-lowest scorer in the Premier League, with only Crystal Palace and Southampton having fewer. Last season, United was tied for



ninth place in the list of top scorers in the Premier League with 57 goals. Since the start of the 2023-24 season, United has a goal difference of minus 4, having scored 65 goals and conceded 69. **POROUS DEFENCE:** United conceded 58 goals in the league last season - its most in the Premier League era - and there are more stats to highlight Ten Hag's inability to bring defensive shape to his team. Since Ten Hag's arrival midway through 2022, United conceded three goals in a game on 24 occasions - more than any manager since Ferguson's retirement. According to Opta, the Premier League's stats supplier, United has faced 1,739 shots in their 128 games under Erik ten Hag. Man City has faced 717 fewer shots despite playing six more games in that time.

**LATE GOALS:** According to Opta, seven of Ten Hag's 27 losses came via a winner in the 90th minute or later. The last of those came in what proved to be Ten Hag's final game in charge when Jarrod Bowen converted a penalty in the second minute of stoppage time to earn West Ham United a 2-1 victory. **EMBARRASSING LOSS:** Ten Hag's tenure got off to a dreadful start with back-to-back losses to Brighton and Brentford in the Premier League in the 2022-23 season. The 4-0 loss at Brentford was arguably the worst under Ten Hag until United arrived at Anfield for a match against its fiercest rival, Liverpool, last season. United lost 7-0 for its heaviest defeat to Liverpool and its worst competitive defeat in more than 90 years.



# Maxwell reveals Kohli blocked him on Instagram for mocking his shoulder injury

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australian all-rounder Glenn Maxwell revealed that Virat Kohli had blocked him on Instagram after he mocked the Indian batting maestro following his shoulder injury during the 2017 Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Kohli and Maxwell were not the best of friends until the Australian joined IPL franchise Royal Challengers Bengaluru in 2021 for a whopping Rs 14.25 crore. Maxwell said that he tried to follow Kohli on Instagram, only to discover that he had been blocked by the former India captain.

"When I knew I was going to RCB, Virat was the first guy to message me and welcome me to the team. When I turned up for the pre-IPL training camp, we obviously got chatting and



spent a fair bit of time training together as you do," Maxwell said during the Willow Talk podcast on LiSTNR Sport.

"So, I go to his social media (to) follow him. Didn't even think about it before that. Never really crossed my mind.

I was like, 'I can't find him.' 'I'm sure he's on social media somewhere, so I didn't think anything of it. Not really that

maybe he wasn't savvy with Instagram.

"Didn't really understand why he wasn't coming up, and then, someone mentioned that 'He might have blocked you. That is the only way you're not able to find him.' I was like, 'Surely not.'"

During the 2017 Test series in India, Kohli suffered a shoulder injury while fielding during the Ranchi match. Later during the Test, Maxwell imitated Kohli by clutching his right shoulder.

Kohli, who missed the subsequent Dharamsala Test due to injury, did not like it. "I went and asked him 'Have you blocked me on Instagram?' And, he was like, 'Yeah, probably. It was when you mocked me during that Test match. I think I got the sh\*\*\* and decided to block you,'" Maxwell continued. "I was like, 'Yeah, that's fair

enough'. So yeah, he (then) ended up unblocking me, and we became great friends after that."

**'WE'VE HAD QUITE A FUNNY RELATIONSHIP':** Since then, the two have settled their differences, working together at RCB.

"It was a nice little story to have as a little side note, but we've had quite a funny relationship leading up to playing the IPL together. Sharing that dressing room and sharing experiences, becoming parents, I suppose, around the same time," Maxwell said. "From the days we were both young and brash and going hard at each other on the field. We were in the front and centre of all that as well, sort of being the orchestrator like 'Maxi, get into his face. Say some words to him and get the young guy to do the hard work," he added.



## Harshit Rana to join Indian squad in Mumbai ahead of third Test

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rookie pacer Harshit Rana will join the Indian squad ahead of the third Test against New Zealand in Mumbai after starring in Delhi's first outright win of the ongoing Ranji Trophy season.

Rana, who was already among the reserves, was released for Delhi's match against Assam before the second Test in Pune that India lost by 113 runs to concede an unassailable 0-2 lead in the series. This was the team's first loss in a Test rubber at home in 12 years.

Rana will join the Indian squad in Mumbai on Wednesday, two days before the match gets underway at the Wankhede Stadium. But it remains unclear if his presence in the dressing room will be as a reserve or as a member.

The 22-year-old has been picked in the main squad for the five Tests in Australia beginning November 22 in Perth. "Harshit will join the team tomorrow," said a BCCI source. With Indian team management carefully monitoring the pacers' workload ahead of the

Australia tour, there is a possibility that spearhead Jasprit Bumrah is rested from the third Test, raising the possibility of Rana's debut. Rana had taken a five-wicket haul against Assam in the first innings and followed it up with two wickets in the second essay. Delhi won the game by 10 wickets.

Delhi head coach Sarandeep Singh said Rana is ready for the grind of Test cricket.

"He is ready to play Test cricket. He is a positive guy, he knows what he is doing. He is ready for the highest level," Sarandeep, a former BCCI selector, told PTI.

"He bowled his heart out for Delhi, he is always looking for wickets and is handy all rounder. He is like a horse, can bowl long spells. I hope he does really well in Australia," he added.

Rana bowled 19.3 overs in the first innings for his five wicket haul against Assam before taking two wickets in 11 overs in the second. His 59 in the first innings helped Delhi take the first innings lead. Rana had also impressed in two games he played in the Duleep Trophy last month.



## Deepthi Sharma reaches career-high second spot in ICC ODI bowlers rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

India off-spinner Deepthi Sharma has been rewarded for her excellent recent form as she moved up two places to reach career-high second spot in the latest ICC women's ODI rankings for bowlers on Tuesday.

On the back of some strong performances in the recent ICC Women's T20 World Cup in the UAE, Deepthi has been one of India's best players through the opening two matches of her side's ongoing white-ball series against New Zealand at home. Deepthi has three wickets from two matches against the White Ferns at a miserly economy rate of 3.42.

It has seen Deepthi gain two places to move to second on the table, and the senior India spinner has closed in on England tweeker and No.1 ranked ODI bowler Sophie Ecclestone. There is also some movement outside the top 10, with the New Zealand trio of Lea Tahuhu (up three places to 12th), Amelie Kerr (up one

spot to 13th) and Sophie Devine (up nine rungs to equal 30th) building on their recent success at the T20 World Cup. Devine (up three rungs to eighth) and Kerr (up one spot to 11th) also gain some ground on the latest list for ODI batters, with compatriots Suzie Bates (up two spots to equal 15th) and Maddy Green (up seven places to 18th) making gains following some decent scores against India.

Right-hander Jemimah Rodrigues (up three rungs to equal 30th) is the big winner on the ODI batter rankings from an India perspective, while Deepthi (up one place to third) and Devine (up two spots to seventh) both make some ground on the latest list for ODI all-rounders.

There is also some joy for a pair of Zimbabwe players, with Chipo Mugeru-Tiripano gaining 21 spots to move to 28th on the batter rankings and teammate Josephine Nkomo improving 13 places to move to 32nd on the list for ODI bowlers after some impressive efforts in their recent series against the USA.

## Paine says he doesn't regret sledging Ashwin in 2020-21 Sydney Test

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Former Australia captain and wicketkeeper batter Tim Paine doesn't regret sledging Ravichandran Ashwin during the third Test of the 2020-21 Border-Gavaskar Trophy, saying he did it to unsettle the India off-spinner, who was "annoying" him by getting his wicket frequently.

After losing the series opener at Adelaide, India defied all odds to clinch the series 2-1. Ashwin played a vital role in drawing the third Test in Sydney, batting for 42.4 overs with an aching back alongside Hanuma Vihari. After failing to break Ashwin's resolve with the bat, Paine



started poking the Indian from behind the stumps. "I can't wait to get you to the Gabba, Ash, I'll tell you what, woo-hoo," Paine said ahead of an over from off-spinner Nathan Lyon. But Paine does not regret it.

"No, I don't because to this day Ashwin didn't play in that (Brisbane) Test match. I wasn't talking to the Indians, I was talking to him. I said we cannot wait to get you to the Gabba. "...Because he was

annoying us, fair to say. He is a fantastic cricketer. He was getting me out all the time and that was annoying me as well," Paine said in a podcast of 'thegradecricketer'.

Ashwin too replied in kind to Paine, saying: "Just like we wanna get you to India. That will be your last series." Paine said the sledge was aimed at the Indian spinner. "But no, that was purely directed straight at him and he pulled out of that Test match because of back spasm."

"Did I had a great game in that match? No, but I fronted up. Actually day one of the Test match he (Ashwin) was joggling laps. Those back spasms couldn't have been that bad," he added.



## Aussie wicketkeeper batter Matthew Wade retires, moves to coaching role

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Matthew Wade, a T20 World Cup winner in 2021, on Tuesday retired from international cricket, and will now start working in a coaching role in Australia's white-ball set-up.

Wade, a wicketkeeper batter, will join Australia's coaching staff under Andre Borovec for the upcoming T20I series against Pakistan, and the Tasmanian will also be with the group for the ODI series starting at Melbourne next week.

The 36-year-old has played 36 Tests, 97 ODIs and 92 T20Is in a career that spanned across 13 years, and his last appearance for the national team was in this year's T20 World Cup. However, Wade will continue to play domestic cricket for Tasmania and Big Bash League for Hobart Hurricanes at least for the next two seasons.

"I was fully aware my international days were most likely over at the end of the last T20 World Cup. My international retirement and coaching have been a constant conversation with George (Bailey) and Andrew

(McDonald) over the past six months," Wade said in a statement released by Cricket Australia.

"Coaching has been on my radar over the last few years and thankfully some great opportunities have come my way, for which I am very grateful and excited," he added.

The left-handed batter thanked CA and teammates for the support throughout his career.

"As my international career closes, I want to thank all of my Australian teammates, staff and coaches. I enjoyed the ride as challenging as it can be at international level," Wade said. "Without good people around me I would have never got as much out of myself as I did," he added. Cricket Australia CEO Nick Hockley said: "Congratulations to Matthew on what has been a wonderful international career during which his skill and versatility has made him an outstanding performer across all formats. 'I'm delighted he will add to his massive contribution by coaching the next generation of stars."

## Rizwan was initially reluctant but later accepted Pak white-ball captaincy: Source



PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan's new white-ball captain Muhammad Rizwan, after initial reluctance, has agreed to the PCB's new selection policy and will not have any voting right in the short-listing of touring squads or the playing eleven, according to a source in the board.

"After discussions with the (Pakistan Cricket) Board chairman, Mohsin Naqvi, and senior selector, Aaqib Javed, Rizwan agreed to the new system where his input in the selection process would be strictly advisory," a source said.

Pakistan's white-ball head coach, Gary Kirsten, resigned on Monday as he did not agree to

be a part of the selection process in an advisory capacity. He also had some other issues with the PCB.

The source said that Rizwan had been assured by the PCB and Aaqib that he would be consulted in finalising teams but the final decision would rest with the five selectors.

"Under the new policy, the selection committee is now responsible for selecting touring squads and the playing eleven," the source said.

The new regime was introduced by the PCB after Pakistan suffered a massive defeat against England in the first Test in Multan earlier this month. Following the innings defeat, new selectors Aaqib, Azhar Ali and Aleem Dar were added to the committee and they were given sweeping powers to select the teams without the consent of the captain or head coach.

The PCB is also sending national selector Asad Shafiq with the team to Australia for the white-ball matches to select the playing eleven after speaking with the other selectors in Pakistan.

**दीप पर्व पर सभी प्रदेशवासियों को बहुत-बहुत बधाई और शुभकामनाएं...**

- मां महालक्ष्मी की कृपा से हमारा छत्तीसगढ़ प्रदेश धन- धान्य और सुख-संपदा से परिपूर्ण रहे।
- गांवों से लेकर शहरों तक हर क्षेत्र में विकास और समृद्धि की रोशनी हो।
- माताओं- बहनों की हथेली हमेशा धन-धान्य से परिपूर्ण रहे।
- खेतों में समृद्धि की फसल लहराए और किसानों के भंडार हमेशा अन्न से भरे रहें।
- बच्चे- युवा सुनहरे भविष्य की ओर अग्रसर हों और उनके सपने साकार हों।
- सभी के जीवन में सुख- संपन्नता आए और तरक्की का प्रकाश हो।
- समृद्धि की मुस्कान सभी के चेहरों पर खिले, आपसी प्रेम और भाईचारा हो।

इन शुभकामनाओं के साथ एक विनम्र अपील भी है कि दीपावली के मौके पर स्थानीय कुम्हारों के हाथों से बने मिट्टी के दीपों से अपने घर सजाएं और त्यौहारों में स्थानीय उत्पादकों से खरीदी कर उनकी भी दीपावली को खुशियों से रोशन कर दें...

**पुनः शुभकामनाओं सहित विष्णु देव साय मुख्यमंत्री, छत्तीसगढ़**